

THE UNIAT CATHOLICS IN RUSSIA.

IN June of this year a Jubilee celebration of a remarkable kind was held in Russia under the auspices of both State and Church. It was a commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the decree of the Emperor Nicholas, by which the Catholics belonging to the Greek rite within the former Polish provinces were forcibly incorporated with the schismatic State Church. The celebration was held at Wilna, the capital of Lithuania, formerly an integral part of Poland, but now classified as one of the western provinces of Russia. Wilna has long been one of the most Catholic cities of the north of Europe, a fact which made more evident the political meaning of the official celebration, for purely official it was. The ancient city of the Jagellons was crowded with Russian officials and Russian troops, and on the 19th of June and the two following days the schismatic clergy and the governor of the province held solemn festival to commemorate the establishment of the schismatic State Church in Catholic Lithuania. With the customary audacity of Russian officials, the ukase of the Czar, which made the profession of the Catholic faith an act of treason for nearly two millions of his subjects, was described as an emancipation from Latin tyranny and the restoration of religious peace. The Russian Government proclaims the fullest toleration for all religions, and its assertions are widely believed outside Russia. It is well that, in America, at least, we should have a true idea of what this so-called liberty of conscience means for Catholics. The history of the suppression of the Uniat Church in Lithuania is an example of it, and it recalls the days of the English Henry the Eighth.

Before the iniquitous partition of Poland between Russia, Prussia and Austria, the Polish territory extended from Turkey to the Baltic, and from a few miles east of the Oder to beyond the great rivers Dwina and Dnieper, comprising an extent one-half greater than France has to-day. Its population of eighteen millions was more than three-fourths Catholic, excepting from the reckoning the Jews and the Mahometans scattered over its territory. In one respect the Catholic Church in Poland had a peculiar character. Its members were divided into two rites—the Latin or Western, identical with that of Western Europe, and the Uniat or Greco-Slavonian, which in its services and church language agrees with the Russian schismatic Church, but differs from it in acknowledging fully the supremacy of the Holy See.

The Uniat Catholics have a hierarchy of their own, distinct from

the Latin Bishops, even in the same districts, and wholly independent of their jurisdiction. Where a Latin and a Uniat diocese exist in the same city, as in Lemberg in Austria, the authority in church matters of each bishop is confined to the clergy and laity of his own rite. To a Latin Catholic the position of the Uniat archbishop is the same as that of the Archbishop of Boston to a Catholic of New York. He may attend mass in a Uniat Church, confess to a Uniat priest or receive the sacraments from his hands, but in all disciplinary matters he must be guided by the rules of his own bishop. In general discipline the most important differences between the two rites are that the Uniat liturgy is in the old Slavonian language instead of Latin, and that celibacy is not required of the parochial clergy. In these points the Polish Uniats follow the example of the Eastern Church, from whence their first missionaries brought Christianity to them and the Russians. The Holy See has, from the earliest times, recognized the existence of the different rites within her communion. The Armenian, the Syriac, the Chaldæan and Coptic rites, as well as the United Greek and Slavonian rites, are all integral parts of the Catholic Church. Saints of all have been canonized by the Roman Pontiffs, and the Uniat martyr, St. Josaphat, is among the most illustrious of modern Catholic saints. The Uniat Catholics of Poland have given ample evidence in our own day that their attachment to the Church is as strong as that of the most Catholic nations of the West.

In Poland, before its territory was dismembered by the three Powers, the Uniat Catholics were a larger body than their Latin brethren. The Polish kingdom, though under one government, was made up of three races—the Poles, properly so-called, in the west, the Lithuanians, a non-Slavonic race with a totally distinct language in the northeast, and the Ruthenians in the southeastern and eastern provinces adjoining Turkey and Russia. Generally speaking the Poles belong to the Latin rite, having received their missionaries from Bohemia and Germany, and the Ruthenians are or were Uniats. In Lithuania the population was almost equally divided between the two rites. Though somewhat less in numbers, however, the Latins formed the more important part of the nation politically, from their higher standard of cultivation. The Poles and Lithuanians were the warrior races, while the Ruthenians had been conquered by the Tartar invaders in the thirteenth century, and their old civilization rudely shaken by the Tartar dominion. Though all were politically equal, there was consequently a tendency on the part of the educated Ruthenians to pass over to the Latin rite, although the practice was discouraged by the Popes and the Church. As a result, the mass of the Uniats were a peasant population and their clergy, though zealous and

devoted, were not in point of cultivation equal to their Latin colleagues. The Russian Government, immediately after its first seizure of Polish territory, took advantage of this state of affairs to make a distinction between the Latin and Uniat Catholics. Both had been guaranteed freedom of religion by the treaty of partition, but Catherine of Russia was utterly unscrupulous in regard to promises or treaties. Personally she was wholly indifferent to any religion, but the policy of the Russian government had always been to enforce strict conformity with the State Church on its subjects as far as possible, and this policy she at once proceeded to apply to her conquests in Poland.

The first partition of that ill-fated kingdom in 1772 gave to Catherine the Ukraine and White Russia, with a population of some millions of Catholics. The Uniats, who formed the majority, had two dioceses in the ceded territory, while the Latins were subject to bishops in the still independent part of Poland. An assistant bishop, Siestrenczewicz, resided in the Russian territory, and Catherine, of her own authority, at once declared him the head of the Latin Church in her dominions. To prevent worse consequences, the Holy See consented, in 1784, to establish the archbishopric of Mohilev within the Russian dominions, and accepted the nomination of Siestrenczewicz as its archbishop. The character of the first Archbishop of Mohilev has been graphically described by Joseph De Maistre, but here it need only be said of him that he proved a docile instrument in the hands of Catherine for undermining the liberties of the Catholic Church. The fate of the Uniat Catholics was, from the commencement, separated from that of their Latin brethren. With the latter Catherine was satisfied to proceed slowly. She forbade their clergy to communicate with Rome except through the government agency, and she hampered their action by the numerous methods familiar to despotic government, but she did not deprive them of all religious freedom. With the Uniat Catholics her course was different. In spite of the toleration proclaimed in the treaty of partition, no sooner did she see herself mistress of the Ukraine than the Uniat bishops were expelled and schismatic bishops installed in their place. The Catholic churches were seized for schismatic worship and the Catholic priests replaced by schismatics through four-fifths of the parishes. In numerous cases it was declared by the Russian officials that the villages demanded schismatic priests, and such communities were at once officially declared to have joined the State Church. Thenceforth any of their members who professed himself a Catholic was treated as a criminal. The heads of families were sent into exile, their property was confiscated, liberty of conscience had no existence for them. How these so-called con-

versions in mass were actually effected may be gathered from the history of the Uniats of Lithuania, who were officially brought into the State Church within our own day, an event that will be briefly sketched hereafter. We will only say here that, according to Count Dmitry Tolstoi in his history of Catholicity in Russia, over one and a half millions of Catholics were thus incorporated officially with the schismatic Church in the last two years of Catherine's reign, and that Father Lescoeur estimates the total number torn away from the Catholic communion during the reign of that empress at eight millions.

The reigns of Paul and Alexander the First gave a truce of thirty years to the Catholic Church in Russia. The first-named sovereign put a stop to the forced conversions, and concluded a concordat with the Holy See during the imprisonment of Pius VI. By this, three dioceses were established for the Uniats in place of five which had formerly existed, and six for the Latin Catholic Church in Russia, exclusive of one Uniat and eight Latin dioceses in Poland. It must be remembered that the provinces taken from Poland by the first and second partitions are regarded by the Russian Government as Russian and not Polish provinces. What has been styled the kingdom of Poland since 1815, when it was constituted by the Congress of Vienna, is a territory around Warsaw of about one-fifth the extent of the former independent Polish State. Its administration, until lately, has been quite distinct from that of the rest of the empire, though still subject to the despotic will of the Czar, and the higher state of civilization of its people has been some slight barrier against official tyranny. The eastern and southern provinces of old Poland are always officially described as the western provinces of Russia, and it is there that is to be found almost the whole Catholic population. The diocese of Saratoff in the south, around Odessa and Saratoff, where the Catholics are mostly German colonists, is the only body of Catholics in Russia that is not of Polish origin, however they may be styled officially.

Alexander I. continued the toleration inaugurated by his father, though the millions of Uniats forced into schism by Catherine were still retained in it by the force of the law. The Uniats of Lithuania, and those of the southern provinces that had escaped registration as schismatics during Catherine's reign, were allowed the exercise of their religion with comparative freedom, though forbidden, under the severest penalties, to receive their late brethren into communion. When Nicholas ascended the throne, in 1825, the Catholic Uniats in his empire numbered a million and a half, in four dioceses, and the Latin Catholics in the western provinces, outside the so-called kingdom of Poland, about two and a half mil-

lions. Within the kingdom the Catholics numbered nearly four millions, including the Uniat diocese of Chelm.

From the beginning of his reign hostility to the Catholic Church appears to have been a passion with Nicholas. A giant in stature and strength, and indomitable in will, with a fanatical belief in the divine right of his own power, Nicholas of Russia was the perfect type of a Russian despot. The Polish insurrection of 1830 excited in him a fierce hatred of everything Polish and Catholic. Two years before that event, indeed, he appears to have resolved on the destruction of the Uniat Church in Russia, but the failure of the insurrection gave him at once the means and a pretext for carrying out his plans. Those plans were laid with a skill equally clever and unscrupulous. The Czar publicly professed his respect for the Catholic Church and its head, and maintained an envoy at Rome as a proof of his amity with the Holy See, while he was plotting the destruction of Catholicity in his dominions. He found a suitable instrument for his work in a Uniat priest, Siemasko, whose career strikingly resembles that of the English Cranmer, and who lent himself, heart and soul, to the work of destroying Catholicity among his countrymen.

Joseph Siemasko was a native of Lithuania, and after his ordination had been appointed a member of the Catholic College at St. Petersburg. The latter is a kind of ecclesiastical board appointed by the Russian Government for the general administration of the Catholic Church in its dominions. It is copied from the "Holy Synod" of the State Church, which, since the abolition of the Patriarchate of Moscow by Peter the Great, has been the supreme power in that Church. As in the synod, the members of the Catholic College are appointed by the government, not by the Catholic Church or its head, and though some Catholic priests are among its members, there is no guarantee whatever of their orthodoxy. Siemasko's position in this college gave him an opportunity of fully learning the wishes of the Czar, and, with the prospect of fortune and power before him, he devoted himself privately to carrying them out. While openly professing his devotion to the Catholic Church, of which he was a priest, he presented, in 1827, a secret memoir to the emperor, in which he reminded him that Catherine had openly declared her intention of extirpating the Uniat Church in her dominions, and deliberately suggested the means that, in his opinion, were best adapted to attain that end. What those means were displays so well the character both of the man himself and of the Russian persecution that we will give a sketch of them as published in 1872 in the *Messenger of Europe*, a monthly review published at St. Petersburg with the indorsement of the Russian censorship. Were it not for such a witness, most

readers unacquainted with the Russian government would find it incredible that such methods should have been employed in a so-called religious propaganda.

In his secret memoir Father Siemasko reminded the Czar that Catherine, his grandmother, had determined to force all the Catholic Uniats into the State Church, and he recalled with approval the means she had employed for that end. The Uniats had been *invited* by the synod to join the schism, and her majesty had ordered the Governor Toutilmine to join *his action* to the invitation. He was specially directed to forbid any Catholic, whether priest or layman, to offer the *least opposition* to the propagation of the schism. The least attempt of such a kind was to be considered a high crime and punished with immediate confiscation. This threat, added Siemasko, *taken in connection with the state of siege* to which those provinces were subjected, produced its effect, and we saw orthodox dioceses spring up in Lithuania and especially in Volhynia and Podolia. It was true that when the vigilance of the local authorities was relaxed a strong reaction set in and the conversions to the State ceased altogether, while returns to the Catholic communion commenced on a large scale. Siemasko, the Catholic priest, carefully pointed out what appeared to him the chief causes of this change, and suggested to the emperor the most effectual means for renewing and perfecting the work of Catherine.

These measures embody a plan of Machiavellian craft for rooting out the Catholic faith. They were, first to create a state college or board of control for the Uniat Church which should have full control of its administration and of which the members should be all appointed by the Czar and devoted to his will. Secondly, to reduce the four dioceses then existing to two, and on the death of the actual bishops to permit to succeed them none but *sure men*, that is to say, men ready to obey the Czar even in opposition to the Pope. It must be remembered that the Russian Government had obtained from the Holy See the right of veto on the appointment of Catholic bishops within its dominions, such as the English Government, in 1814, tried unsuccessfully to obtain in Ireland and England. The third measure was to establish Government seminaries for the Uniat ecclesiastical students. These were to be nominally Catholic, but to be kept rigidly apart from all communication with the Latin clergy, and the professors and superiors to be appointed by the Uniat College, that is to say, by the Russian Government, whose creature it was. Finally, the monasteries and convents, which were among the firmest supports of the Catholic faith, were to be diminished as much as possible, and to be brought under the full control of the same college in the same manner as the schismatic convents are governed by the Russian Synod.

These measures were approved by the emperor, and steps were immediately taken to put them in execution. It is a striking comment on the morality of the system thus devised for changing the belief of a million and a half of Christians that the Russian Government professed to apply them with full respect for the Catholic religion, and while maintaining externally the most amicable relations with the Holy See. The author of the plot, Siemasko, was himself proposed on the next vacancy as a suffragan bishop and took the oath of fidelity to the Church and the Holy See while secretly bending all his efforts to destroy the faith of his flock. Subsequently, in 1833, he was appointed Bishop of Lithuania with the consent of the Holy See, which was kept in profound ignorance of his designs. To disguise the imperial projects more effectually, a perfectly devoted prelate of advanced age, Mgr. Bulhak, was nominated Archbishop of Polock, the other Uniat diocese, which was still permitted to exist. The government, however, succeeded in having a coadjutor appointed with him, Luzynski, who was fully involved in Siemasko's perfidy, and as the archbishop was obliged to reside at St. Petersburg, his coadjutor became virtually the ruler of the diocese. Siemasko also received a coadjutor, Zubko, who was devoted to his projects. Thus three secret apostates were vested with full canonical power over the Uniat Catholic Church, and enabled to mature their plans for its ruin with the apparent authority of the Holy See itself.

Siemasko lost no time in commencing his work. Assuming as a pretext that innovations had been introduced into the Uniat rite during the last century, he proceeded to assimilate its external practices to those of the schismatic church. The images and pictures in the churches were gradually replaced by Russian pictures in the peculiar metallic relief required by the schismatic discipline. The iconostases or rood screens, separating the sanctuary from the body of worshippers during the Mass, in Greek churches, had long been abandoned by the Uniats, but Siemasko ordered them to be introduced again. Organs, too, which are not used in Russia, he ordered to be removed from the Catholic churches, and the public Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was forbidden as unknown to ancient usage. A more important step was the substitution of schismatic missals and breviaries for the Catholic books among the Uniatic clergy in 1834. This drew forth the warmest opposition. Fifty-four priests in one district addressed a petition to the emperor demanding the right to practise their religion in the manner of their ancestors, and scarcely a hundred out of eight hundred priests could be found to accept the new books. This resistance met with the severest punishment. Several were banished, others imprisoned, and all were charged with canonical disobedience to the Catholic

Church itself. Father Micewicz, of Kamienec, was subjected to six months' imprisonment on bread and water for this crime, and subsequently banished from the diocese. Meanwhile, as the faithful priests were removed, Siemasko filled their places with newly ordained candidates whose conformity to his own orders was secured in advance. The Archbishop Bulhak was powerless to interfere. He was practically deprived of all communication with his priests by the Government, and Luzynski, his coadjutor, assumed his authority at will. The Government made every effort to win Archbishop Bulhak to its views, but in vain. He steadfastly refused to acknowledge its authority or to separate himself from the Holy See, and the formal defection of the Uniat Church was postponed until his death in 1838.

It was officially made in the beginning of the following year. Siemasko, and the two coadjutors, Bishops Luzynski and Zubko, held a synod and petitioned the emperor and the Russian Synod to unite the Uniat Catholics with the State Church. The request was granted, of course. An imperial ukase was addressed to General Protasoff, the procurator of the Holy Synod (in Russia, military officers fill ecclesiastical functions), ordering that body to examine the petition and refer their answer to His Majesty. The synod duly obeyed, and admitted graciously the three Catholic bishops and the whole body of Uniat Catholics to the communion of the State Church "by the will of the Sovereign and Emperor Nicholas Pavlovitch, autocrat of all the Russias." The so-called union of the Uniats with the Schism was celebrated with official rejoicings throughout the empire, and by order of Nicholas a medal was struck to commemorate the event. It bore the legend, "Separated by hate in 1595; reunited by love in 1839."

What was the nature of the "love" which had brought about the supposed conversion was speedily made clear. The Czar and the schismatic synod had assumed the full right of three bishops deliberately and fraudulently appointed to betray their trusts, to change the faith of a million and a half of Catholics. According to Russian law, if the name of law can be applied to a system which emanates from the arbitrary will of an irresponsible ruler the Uniat Church in Russia outside of Poland had ceased to exist.

The Catholic population, however, in spite of its isolation, and the crafty measures taken for its deception, declined to accept the schismatic worship. In many places they refused to allow the schismatic priests to enter the churches, in others they absented themselves altogether from public worship. Several villages addressed petitions to the governors of provinces, and even to the Czar himself, begging to be allowed the exercise of the Catholic religion, but all in vain. The doctrine laid down during the last

century by an English judge, that the law did not recognize the existence of any Catholic within the British dominions, finds a parallel in Russia to-day. The Uniat Catholics had been declared schismatics by the law, and hence they could have no right to be Catholics, was the tenor of the answers given to all their demands. As these demands, however, had an unfavorable effect on public opinion, the authorities proceeded to suppress them vigorously. Troops were called into requisition, and the Catholic peasants were driven, at the point of the bayonet in many cases, into their own churches to the Mass of a schismatic priest, or even to receive a sacrilegious communion at his hands. The scenes which took place at Dudakowitz, a large village in the district of Vitebsk, in 1841, will serve as an example of the means used to force the Catholic population into the Schism. It is only one of many illustrations of the heroic attachment of the Lithuanians and Ruthenians to the faith from which the Government had publicly proclaimed their defection.

At Dudakowitz, in the beginning of the Holy Week, in 1841, two years after Siemasko's apostasy, a battalion of infantry was dispatched from Mohilev to enforce the attendance of the population at schismatic worship. The peasants gathered around their church and refused to admit the schismatic priest. They remained on guard day and night until Good Friday, when the soldiers commenced to burn their houses, and thus forced them to abandon their post. An old man named Lucas, who had been foremost in encouraging the resistance, with four others, was then arrested and required to profess conformity with the State Church. All five refused, whereon they were ordered to receive three hundred lashes each. Lucas, as the oldest and most respected, received his punishment first, and as each hundred lashes were completed, he was asked again if he would accept the Czar's religion, and on each refusal the blows were renewed. He was then removed to a cell in the neighboring convent, where he died the same night, after exhorting his children and grandchildren to remain forever faithful to the Catholic Church, and to bury him without any attendance of schismatic priests. One of his companions, named Gaspard, also died the same night, and a third, who survived, was sent prisoner to a schismatic convent at a distance from his home. Notwithstanding this example, the population of the town refused to abandon their faith, and during eleven years the church which had been handed over to the schismatics remained empty of worshippers. During that time they were deprived of all exterior worship; they baptized their own children and contracted marriage before the heads of the village, since no Catholic priest was allowed to approach them. Finally, in 1854, the Government ordered that the whole commu-

nity should be banished to Siberia in a body unless they consented to attend the State Church, and this menace at length forced them into external conformity with the Schism.

At Porozow, another village, the resistance of the Catholics was maintained up to 1862, and, indeed, it may be said to continue yet. On one occasion, all who refused to attend the schismatic service were sentenced to receive sixty lashes if men, and forty if women. Such were the means used to bring about the union which has just been commemorated in Russia.

The priests who refused to change their faith at the order of the Czar fared even more hardly. They were not only held guilty of apostacy from the State Church to which they had never belonged, but also of canonical rebellion against the bishops who had themselves abandoned the Catholic Church. Thus both civil and ecclesiastical penalties were poured on their devoted heads. Fourteen were imprisoned at Zachorow in 1840 in the former Basilian convent, where one, Father Slobotski, was left to die of hunger in a dark cell, and the others, after two years, were sent to finish their lives in different schismatic monasteries in Russia. A large number, estimated at from one hundred and six to a hundred and forty, were sent as convicts to Siberia. At Torokany, Father Baranowski, when imprisoned in the monastery, managed to address a petition to the Czar, and, by way of answer, was flogged and placed in a dark cell for several days. On opening its door at length his body was found stretched, without life, in an attitude of prayer. It was few, indeed, of those cases that came to the public knowledge. Once buried in the schismatic convents, the Catholic priests and monks who were imprisoned there were lost forever to sight. It must be remembered, that in Russia the publicity given to political events in America is utterly unknown. To criticise the acts of high officials is a crime which subjects those guilty of it to the severest penalties. The treatment of the Uniat nuns by Siemasko offers a striking instance of the secrecy which the Russian Government throws around the most atrocious acts of its officials. It is also a history of persecution unparalleled in modern times, and which recalls in our days the cruelties of the early persecutors of the Church.

Though there were a number of convents, both of men and women, in the Uniat Catholic Church previous to the apostacy of Siemasko, no account of their action in the question of a change of their faith was given to the world. It was assumed by the Russian authorities, and generally accepted by the outside world, that they had yielded to the pressure exercised on them and accepted the State Church doctrines either willingly or unwillingly. More than six years after the so-styled union of the Uniats to the

Russian Church, a woman, nearly exhausted with travel, and bearing on her person the marks of violent punishment, presented herself at the convent of the Sisters of Charity in Posen, in 1845, and asked for an asylum. She was the former abbess of the Basilian Catholic convent in Minsk, in the heart of Lithuania, several hundred miles from Posen, and had made her way on foot, after escaping from the prison in which the small remnant of her community was still expiating its fidelity to its faith. Of two hundred and forty-five nuns who had refused to abandon their faith, the Abbess Macrina Mieczyslawska alone escaped to tell their fate to Catholic Europe and the Sovereign Pontiff. The outburst of public indignation which her tale excited throughout Europe was immense, and the envoy of Russia to the Holy See, M. de Boutenieff, presented a note to the Pope in which he denied the possibility of such deeds having been done in his master's dominions, and endeavored to throw doubt on the fact that Sister Macrina had ever been in a Lithuanian convent. The note itself was a model of diplomatic evasion. A Paris journal, in giving its account of the abbess's relation, had inadvertently placed her convent at Kowno instead of Minsk, an error which was corrected in the following issue. M. de Boutenieff, in his note, attached himself mainly to this journalistic error, and declared that never had been a convent at Kowno, and that therefore the whole story was a fabrication. He further added that no nuns had been transferred to Russian convents, and that their convents had been left undisturbed, and even received new grants from the liberality of the Government. This fact would, if true, have been easily proved. It was only necessary to bring forward the testimony of the communities themselves, but that M. de Boutenieff carefully avoided attempting. Sister Macrina's story was submitted to a rigorous examination at Rome by a committee appointed by the Propaganda, and was found to bear intrinsic evidence of its accuracy. The abbess herself survived for twenty-four years in a Roman convent, only dying in 1869, and during that time she continued to impress the fullest confidence on the numerous visitors who came to examine her history, and on all who were in daily relations with her. Her account is too long for insertion here, but a brief summary of it, mainly told in her own words, will show how the Uniat Catholics of Lithuania were really "reunited" to the schismatic church of the Czar.

"During the summer of 1838 (that is, before the formal apostacy) Siemasko invited us three times in writing to go over to the Schism. Siemasko required that we should sign at the bottom of the invitation which he had sent us these words, 'We have read it,' which for him would have been equivalent to 'we have accepted

it.' After the third refusal he threatened us. Presenting himself in person for the first time after his apostacy, he asked me angrily: 'Why hast thou not signed the paper which I have thrice sent thee?' 'Because,' I replied, 'I have detected infamous falsehoods in it.' Seeing the same spirit in all our sisters, he cried out: 'I pardon thee on account of the emperor's benignity, who is willing to allow you three months for reflection; but if you persist in resistance, I announce to you all that you can imagine most terrible.' The third day after this scene, Siemasko, accompanied by the Governor of Minsk, Wznakoff, and a troop of Cossacks, broke open the convent gates at five in the morning, as we were going to the chapel. 'Where are you going?' he asked, and then added: 'This is the last moment of liberty that remains to you; you are still free to choose between keeping your property (with the additions which the generosity of the emperor is ready to make to it if you go over to the orthodox religion), or penal servitude and Siberia if you persist in your refusal.' 'Of the two, we choose penal servitude and Siberia rather than abandon Jesus Christ and His vicar on earth.' Siemasko then ordered the soldiers to remove us. At the church door I threw myself at the feet of the governor and asked permission to take leave of our Lord in the Holy Sacrament. He consented; and we entered the church and prostrated ourselves before the Host in prayer for a short time. There were thirty-five of us, and when the soldiers received orders to drive us out, thirty-four rose; the thirty-fifth lay dead before the Host. Her name was Rosalie Lanzecka; she was fifty-seven years old, and had been a nun thirty.

"When they had expelled us the orphans and our other pupils ran out crying. The inhabitants of the town joined them and attended us to our first halting-place, about a league off, where they stopped to tie us in couples and put irons on our hands and feet. The people were dispersed, and we had to proceed at a forced pace. They raised up such as fell and struck them. After seven days' march we reached Witebsk, where we were placed in a community of schismatic nuns (Czernice) who had been installed in the former Basilian convent six months before. . . .

"The Czernice had been brought from the Don, and were women of coarse habits, chiefly widows of soldiers who received a monthly allowance of seven rubles each from the Government. Our sisters, six months before, had been put into a single room situated in the stable yard, and obliged to discharge all the menial offices of the house. At the time of the suppression the community numbered eighteen, but before our arrival the abbess and four sisters had sunk under the hardships inflicted upon them. . . . The fetters which bound us in couples on the road

were removed and chains put on our feet, which we bore night and day for the whole seven years following. We were obliged to sweep the house, light the fires, and carry in water before six every morning, after which we were led to our hard labor, which varied according to the season. At first they made us break stones and draw them in barrows to which we were chained. At the end of two months the punishment of flogging began, twice a week, fifty lashes. We were flogged in the court-yard under an open shed, in the presence of the whole community, including the apostate priest Michalewicz, who had charge of us. What most affected us was, that we were beaten naked. The flogging over, we were led at once back to our hard work. After one of these floggings, Sister Columbia Gorska fainted on her way to work. She was revived by a heavy blow, and dragged herself to the barrow, but expired on attempting to move it. Another died from a blow on the head given her with a log of wood by the Superior of the Czernice. Two others, Susanah Rypinska and Coletta Sielawa, died after more floggings in 1839.

“In the end of 1840, two years after our arrival, soldiers arrived who placed irons on our hands and coupled us as before, and obliged us to set out, we were not told whither. After two days we arrived at Polock, where we were shut up in the former Basilian convent, now occupied by Czernice, under control of the Arch-priest Wierovkin. We found there ten sisters, the remains of the community which had been composed of twenty-five members two years before. The Abbess Rozanska and fourteen others had perished in that time. Two of the survivors had become insane from blows on the head. One of them, Sister Filihouser, died shortly, the other, Teresa Bienecka, survived about six months. On returning to our prison one day we found her dead and bleeding.

“The Czernice of Polock treated us in the same way as those of Witebsk. We had more work under them. We suffered most when we were employed on the building of a house for Siemasko; we lost three sisters on it in eight days by accidents. Their names were Ilgocka, Siecieka and Landauska. During the same summer five were buried alive in an excavation they were making for potters' clay. Shortly after nine more perished; the wall on which they were at work gave way, and my nine sisters were buried under the ruins.

“In the fall of 1841 Siemasko arrived at Polock. On meeting us he expressed his satisfaction that we had relinquished our obstinacy, and were ready to accept the benefits of the orthodox religion. I asked him ‘who had invited him to come again to tempt us.’ ‘Yourself,’ he replied. ‘What!’ I exclaimed. ‘Then it is your sisters,’ he rejoined. ‘Which of them?’ All the sisters in-

dignantly cried out a denial, and turning to him I said, 'Apostate, we are, and by God's help always will be, ready to die for the faith as our sisters have died before us.' He went away blaspheming, after giving orders to have us flogged. We were scourged till dark, and the same night Sister Holynska died in my arms."

It is too revolting to continue the further account of these barbarities, which continued until the escape of the abbess and three other sisters in the spring of 1845. During a celebration the whole schismatic community got drunk for three days, and the four nuns resolved to attempt an escape. They removed their chains and climbed the wall of their prison during the last night of the feast. Outside of their prison they separated to give a better chance that one at least might be able to reveal to the world the true character of the conversion of the Uniat Catholics.

It is a difficult point to determine how far a century of persecution, such as has been described, has succeeded in rooting out the Catholic faith among its victims. Externally the Uniat Catholic Church has ceased to exist in Russia. Its hierarchy has been destroyed, its churches closed, its priests banished, and its members are officially enrolled in the schismatic State Church; but all this is no proof that the mass of the people are not still Catholic in will. The Russian Government rigorously prohibits any investigation into this point; but in spite of its vigilance, indications are not wanting that the mass of the population yet adheres to the Catholic Church. In 1860, the whole population of five villages deserted the schismatic worship, and thronged to the Catholic Latin churches near Mohilev, and the government found no other means of preventing them than that of closing all the neighboring Catholic churches. In 1858 the population of Dziernowice presented a petition to Alexander the Second, begging to be allowed to return to the faith of their ancestors.

The Senator Stcherbinin was specially sent by the Czar to suppress this religious movement, and in his official report he informed his imperial master that they remained inflexible to all exhortations, and declared that they would not belong to orthodoxy. The senator, by his own account, imprisoned the leaders at Witebsk, and announced to the people that they must remain in the orthodox church, under the severest penalties, after which he left the completion of their conversion to the police. Finally, after several months, the population was forced to the schismatic church and with that the Government appeared satisfied. Mr. Stcherbinin stated plainly in his report that the apostacy was on the point of assuming large proportions, and that it threatened already the dissolution of the union of 1839, by which the Uniat Catholics had been proclaimed schismatics. He added that the Uniat priests,

that had conformed to the State Church, had lost all public respect and were generally regarded as renegades, and that the Archbishop Siemasko himself had no better name. To prevent a renewal of the religious agitation, Stcherbinin proposed that for the future a special law should be enacted by which, in case a village or community should secede in mass from the State Church, all the heads of families in it should be sent to convents in Russia as prisoners, *to confirm them in the confession of the orthodox rite.* Alexander II. wrote in his own hand on the margin of the report: "Put it in execution if the case occurs."

The Schism evidently has not yet struck deep root in the hearts of the Uniats, though "reunited to it by love in 1839." There is every reason to believe that the sentiments of the people of Dziernowice are shared by the ten millions of their countrymen in Poland and Russia, who have been officially incorporated in the State Church, and that it only needs the establishment of religious freedom in the Russian empire to bring them back to the Church which they have never abandoned. The Jubilee of this year is like Diocletian's famous proclamation of the extinction of Christianity fifteen centuries ago, and is likely to be just as effectual in its results.
