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Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

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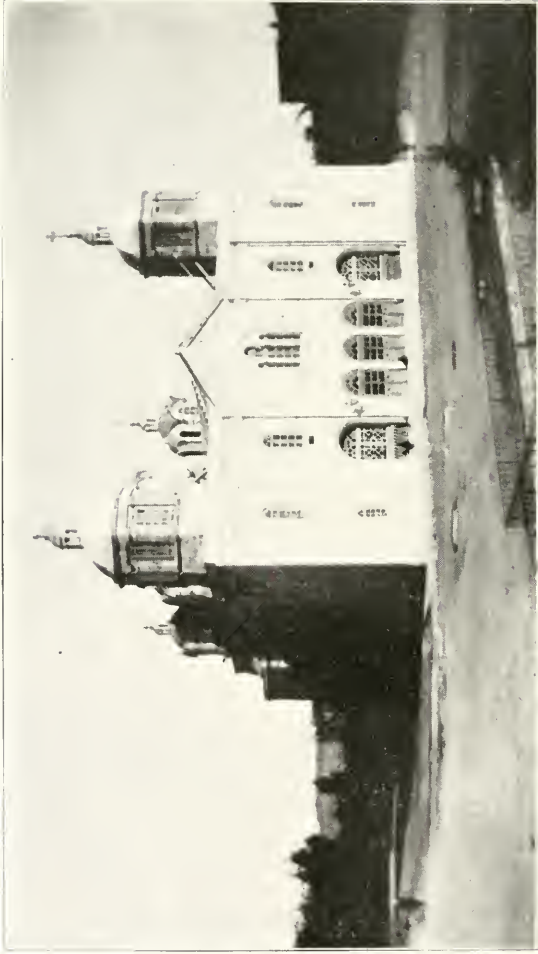
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RUSSIAN CATHEDRAL, JERUSALEM.

Frontispiece to The Open Court

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RUSSIA AND PALESTINE

BY AMOS I. DUSHAW

THE collapse of the Russian Empire was not without its influence on the Holy Land. In the days of her power when she extended her arms far and wide to seize territory she also had her covetous eyes on Palestine, and among the nations contending for positions of prominence through their respective religious societies the position of Russia in Palestine was second to none of them. The Russian Palestine Society purchased extensive, valuable and strategic sites in the leading towns, Jaffa, Jerusalem, and Nazareth, and erected barrack-like structures for their pilgrims who thronged the land in great multitudes during the sacred festivals; monasteries for monks and nuns; and many churches and schools. The Russian Tower on the Mount of Olives is still a landmark, unrivalled in height, and from it one gets a better view of the surrounding country than Moses did from Pisgah's mountain height. Their schools for the native children were exceedingly popular with the natives of the Orthodox faith because of Russia's political protection, which was real and meant much in the days of the Turk. The Russian Society was also noted for its generosity in matters of finance. The pilgrims brought to the country much wealth, and the Greek church because of its control of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and because of similarity of faith, grew rich on their generosity, due to the natural piety and devoutness of the Russian peasantry. The love of these pilgrims for the Holy Land was not surpassed even by the pious Jews. The Greek clergy took full advantage of their credulity, and laughed at what they called, "Russian Superstitions." But today, due to the absence of the Russian pilgrims, this Church is in financial difficulty, despite the fact that it is in possession of much of the best land in the country and also in the towns, purchased with the money pro-

cured from the peasants they despised. Her hosts of monks are in a semi-starving condition because they have not learned the art of useful toil. Their laziness was their undoing. Had these monks carried out the Apostolic injunction, "to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you; that ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing," they would today be independent of outside aid, have the respect of those who are without, have enough food and raiment for themselves and for their poor, and would have been a shining light of industry and thrift to their many followers. I suggested this to some of them and they were candid enough to admit the folly of their past life. Perhaps the fall of Russia may not be alto-



RUSSIAN TOWER ON MOUNT OF OLIVES FROM JANCHO ROAD.

gether without some blessing to this church. Charity has had no debauching influence in Palestine, on Christian as well as Jew.

In their intense desire to acquire land in the Holy Land the Russians came in too late to acquire sacred sites, but they avoided the temptation of starting rival sites. For instance, Jaffa has the good fortune of boasting two houses of Simon the Tanner. One of the sites is under Latin control the other under Moslem, but both places afford fine views of the sea. It was in Jaffa that St. Peter had that wonderful vision (Acts x.), and which soon convinced him of the oneness of the human race, and that Christ's salvation was for all. He said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness,

is acceptable to him." This discovery was of world-wide significance in its results. About a mile from the old town is the Russian settlement where the location of the house of Tabitha, or Dorcas is shown as well as her tomb. The spacious grounds are enclosed with a good wall and a substantial iron gate. But once inside one feels that its caretakers believe in order, cleanliness, and comfort. It is one of the bright spots of the city of Jaffa. Within its enclosure are orange, fig, and olive trees; vegetables and flowers; shady walks, tables and benches for those who may wish to enjoy a glass of tea in the open in the cool of the afternoon; rooms for pilgrims, and a fine church with a very tall steeple, or tower. The walls of this



JERUSALEM'S LEADING STREET, JAFFA ROAD.

(Buildings on Right, Russian.)

church have many paintings of Biblical stories appropriate for the place. From the tall church-tower one gets a grand view of the Mediterranean Sea, the Judean hills, the plain of Sharon with well-known towns, native villages, German and Jewish colonies, and above all, the orange gardens which stretch out far and wide over the Plain give the impression that the whole territory is paradise-like in scenery and fertility. This beautiful spot is a worthy memorial to the memory of a Christian woman of whom it is written, "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas (Gazelle): this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." Acts ix. 36.

Jerusalem has two gardens of Gethsemane and two places where St. Stephen was stoned. The one we are all familiar with is the Latin Garden. The Greek Garden is a little further up the Mount of Olives, and only a short distance from the Latin Garden. Alexander III, emperor of Russia built for the Greeks in their garden the beautiful cathedral of St. Mary Magdalen. His son, the unfortunate, Nicholas II contributed funds towards the building of the Church of St. Stephen, in connection with the Dominican Monastery, on the ground the Latins claim to be the place where St. Stephen was stoned. And it was the Russians who enlarged and restored the Monastery of Mar Saba. This well-known Monastery is under Greek control. In these instances of Russia's generosity we see why she was so prominent in Palestine before the war.

At Ain Karim, about four miles from Jerusalem, supposed to be the birthplace of John the Baptist, there is a Russian settlement. The place has a copious spring of good water, and is called, "St. Mary's Well," because the mother of Jesus, on her visit to her cousin Elizabeth, the mother of the Baptist, quenched her thirst here. If the mother of Jesus did visit this place we can very well believe that she drank of this water. Out of the 2,000 inhabitants, Moslems, Latins, Greeks, there are about 150 Russians. The section occupied by them is on the side of a hill. Here they have their own church, and the settlement is clean, attractive and rather picturesque.

In Nazareth the Christian denominations are well represented: Orthodox Greeks, United Greeks, Latins, Maronites, Anglicans, and Scotch Presbyterians. The Presbyterians are engaged in medical missionary work. Here the Russians have established themselves on an independent basis. The Russian Palestine Society before the war had schools for boys and girls, a teachers' college, a hospice for their pilgrims, and a hospital. The natives of Nazareth were pretty well looked after along missionary efforts.

But of all the places owned by the Russians none of them surpassed the section known as "The Russian Compound" in Jerusalem. Here they had a hospital, a dispensary, barrack-like dwellings for the pilgrims, dwellings for their priests and wealthier pilgrims, the Russian consulate, a cathedral, bowers and gardens with benches for the benefit of the public. Now, with the exception of the Cathedral and a few rooms occupied by the very few monks and priests, the vast property is occupied by the British and used for barracks, courts, military warehouses, prison, hospitals, and the spacious grounds used for drilling, military reviews, and as playgrounds for

the soldiers. But the British are compensating the Russians for the use of their property. I never walked through this spacious compound without recalling David's lament over Saul and Jonathan.

"Thy glory, O Israel, is slain upon thy high places!
How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle!"

In the days of her power she was proud. Her consuls were arrogant, treating even the Turkish authorities with scorn. They despised their Jewish countrymen, treated them with utter contempt, and even refused them the protection they were entitled to, and the Jews found the Turk to be a better Christian than the Russian. It was Russian tyranny and brutality that led them to seek the hospiti-



RUSSIAN COMPOUND.

able shores of the Turkish empires, because the Turks were seldom, if ever, deliberately unkind to the Jews. Then the Russians were on the top, and the Russian Jews ground down under the iron heels of despotism and brutality. But today, the Jews of Palestine are on the top, and the Russians down and out. This recalls to my mind the words of a great Hebrew prophet and patriot, "Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, everyone of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all they that prey upon thee will I give for a spoil." Had Russia stayed on the winning side until the end it is doubtful if the Balfour Declaration would ever have seen the

light of day. But no one in Palestine, not even the Russian Jews, are in any way unkind to the poor Russians, the majority of whom are women.

Among these Russian women are many of real culture and ability, who before the war were socially well-connected. But hard times have not robbed them of their refinement, devottness, bigness of heart, and the desire to maintain their self-respect, and there are no beggars among them, and they are all more than willing to work for their daily bread at anything. Their services are in demand and appreciated because of their ability and willingness to do an honest day's work. I remember a little old lady who used to visit us. She was well connected in Russia, and before the war was able to help the needy, but now that she was in distress she never uttered a word of complaint. She was a woman of refinement and culture, able to converse fluently in several European languages, and withal of a very charming personality, and loved by all who knew her. I also recollect while walking one afternoon from Ain Karim to Jerusalem being stopped by a strong Russian woman, a member of the Ain Karim colony, who asked me if I knew of any work she could do. I am glad to state that Doctor Hart, the American secretary of the Jerusalem Y. M. C. A. did all he could to help these worthy women in many ways. One day I saw a Russian woman distribute a few small loaves of black bread to native beggars. Suddenly she was surrounded by a host of such beggars; they seemed to spring from the ground and almost mobbed her in their persistent demand for bread. She had a hard time to get away from them, pleading in Russian, that she had nothing more to give. This shows their compassionate disposition, and why in better days they were so welcomed to the Holy Land. They are not a mean, penurious, grasping people. At every service in the Greek and Russian churches these poor, forlorn women can be seen devoutly worshipping. Economic distress, stranded in a foreign country, separated from friends and relations yet their faith in God is as strong and deep as ever. They convey the impression that such a people are not without a great future. One Saturday, at the close of the service in the Russian cathedral in the Russian Compound, I said to the priests and several worshippers that America had a friendly interest in Russia, and that I believed that God would bring them out of their present distress. They seemed pleased and thanked me for my words of encouragement.

We wish for Russia a real spiritual awakening, and when that day comes she will be a power for righteousness instead of being a power for tyranny as she was in the days of her power and pride. When that day comes she will know that greatness is not to be measured in terms of mighty armies, navies, and extensive territories, and that "not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord," are great and enduring things achieved.