

just as we were setting out, two Georgian merchants appeared who had a wine-cellar in the monastery village, and asked to be allowed to go with me, as otherwise they would not be able to find means of getting there. I readily agreed, for they might serve well as guides, and tell me all they knew of the state of affairs in the Caucasus. To begin with, they initiated me into all their private affairs, and told me that they were owners of large vineyards in the district. The wine, which is worth 10 kopecks a bottle on the spot, is exported to European Russia, and yields on an average a yearly profit of 12,000 roubles (about £1200); but this year their income, owing to the strikes, would not exceed 8000.

Meanwhile we were driving through the Tatar village Taturnagh, through cultivated lowlands with active movement and desolate tracts where the soil lay fallow; and at length the church tower of Echmiadzin and the cloister buildings stood before us, and we drew up at the main gate, where I parted with my chance companions, and was conducted by an Armenian to a large court, to be welcomed by a pleasant and kindly monk, who offered to show me as much as he could in an hour's time.

Echmiadzin, "where the Only-begotten Son descended," was founded in the year 301 by the apostle of Armenia, Gregory, and became in 1441 the seat of the *katolikos* or the patriarch of the Armenian-Gregorian schismatic church, as well as of the holy Armenian synod. The monastery is divided into three sections, each with its church,—hence the common Turkish name *Üch-kilisse*, "the three churches,"—and is partially surrounded by a fortified wall with small towers. In the interior of the principal church or cathedral, a small tabernacle, resting on four columns, marks the place where the Redeemer descended from heaven in the year 301, revealed Himself to the Apostle Gregory, who won over King Tiridates to Christianity, and pointed out the site where the church should be built. It is erected on a cruciform plan, under a cupola, in Byzantine style, and its interior decoration is very simple and unostentatious.

The grave black-clad monk who showed me round informed me that the cloister has now only 35 monks, who