

THE GREAT NOVGOROD

By NICHOLAS ROERICH

Let us grant that our North is poorer than other lands. Let us grant that its ancient image has vanished. Let us grant that in general very little is known of its true character. But, the tales of the North are found enchanting. The winds of the North are vigorous and joyous. The lakes of the North are dreamy; full of reverie are its rivers. The dark forests exhale wisdom. Its green hills have witnessed the passing of many a century. Its grey stones are full of miracles. Even the Varangians come from the North. We are ever quoting beautiful ancient Russia.

"What rough habits they have!" records Nikons' ancient Chronicle about the inhabitants of Novgorod.

Princes were afraid to go and rule the vigorous and restless Illmenians.

But Marfa Posadnitsa prophesied well: Great Novgorod has become one of the most inconspicuous, the most silent, of the Russian towns.

It has become secluded.

It has lost its former aspect. Nobody now can imagine how the once mighty, picturesque and busy Hanseatic city extended many miles out to the Yurievsky Monastery, to Nereditsa, to Liadki. Nobody

now can realize that the bare hills and hollows—the present environs of Novgorod—were once the vital habitations of the city.

It is even difficult to imagine that the inhabitants of Novgorod in the past, dominated practically all Pomorya upto the Arctic Ocean and along the rivers of Pechora and Vym, and the high impenetrable mountains in the country named Siberia along the great river Ob to the mouth of the white river, haunts of wild animals and sables.

It is hard to understand how those Novgoroders came to the Caspian Sea and the Sea of Venice.

Unimaginably broad was the grasp of the "youth" of Novgorod. The youthful free man perpetually aspired and dared. The success of the free men was the success of the big city. If they failed, the elders did not mind, since it was a venture of "youth." How wise!

Wherever there was something worth-while—the Novgoroders were there. From everywhere they bore all that was worthy into the treasury of Novgorod; kept, hid it carefully.

It is possible that these treasures are lying buried for us there.

In the very Novgorod—in each hillock, mound and hollow—gleam

traces of an incalculably distant, vast existence.

Its black earth is saturated with charcoal, chips of pottery, bits of stone and brick of all ages, chips of tile and all sorts of metallic fragments.

Walking along its streets and alleys, one can pick up under foot pieces of broken glass of the tenth or twelfth centuries, bits of old Venetian smalt beds; here a coin, a piece of a small cross; there fragments of lead seals.

While looking observingly at the rich layers of the past epochs it seems that the statement of V. Peredolsky is not exaggerated when he says that the inhabited strata of the soil of Novgorod is over seven sajens (forty-nine feet) deep.

You feel you walk here on an ageless grave-yard, an ancient inhabited spot, sacred, but superfluous to life.

Any contemporary life upon such a sacred *Kurgan*—tomb—seems out of place and very likely Great Novgorod, not without reason, is sunken in the sound sleep of time.

It is time to turn again seriously to old Novgorod.

I love the region of Novgorod. I love all its hidden aspects. Everything that lies there is ready for us.

Why is it necessary to travel distant parts, to search the distant deserts, when right here in our own soil are buried such worlds of treasure? The province of Novgorod has experienced everything.

Past is its valor, past is its culture, past is its confidence. Undiscovered stretches of treasure, it is actually difficult to choose where to begin.

We have such many-sided proofs. But from which shall we proceed? Investigation of churches, exploration of old buildings, or excavation of cities, and the most ancient remains beneath them.

The most stirring to our imagination is the authentic view of old churches and excavation of ancient ruins, where each stroke of the shovel may reveal a magnificent discovery.

The Rurik site, the place of the oldest settlement, where in later times the ruling princes were accustomed to live with their families, is full of potential discoveries. In the gardens along the shore, one often discovers the most varied objects from the most recent to the stone age, inclusive.

One senses how after vast settlements of the stone age in the lower region of Kolomtzy, at the mouth of the Volhov river in the Ilmen, the life expanded towards more elevated regions through Gorodistche, Nereditza, Liadka—to Novgorod proper.

In the regions of Goroddistche are likely to be discovered the remains of the princely *terems* foundations of churches, of which only one remains—the one built by Mstislav Vladimirovich.

What illuminating tablets of the strata of life might not be excavated from such an ancient place!

Bésides the Gorodistche section, a number of suburban sites vie with each other concerning the importance of their ancient history.

Kolomotzy, where Peredolsky obtained a great many of his objects of the stone age, Liadka, Lipna,

Nereditza, Seltzo, Rakom (where Yaroslav had his palace), Migra, Zverintzi, Viajishtchi, Radiatina, Kolopgorodok Sokol mountain, Volotova, Lisitchia Mountain, Kovalovo, and many other sites and cemeteries await their explorer.

But the chronicled and legendary places are not the only ones filled with their hidden treasures.

First of all, the city itself is filled with them. Even if we do not know what filled the deserted hillocks through which human habitations formerly extended, yet in the boundaries of the existing city are known many places which must have left their traces.

The court of Yaroslav (1030), The court of Petratinov, Nmetzki court, Pluskowsky court, Gotzki court, the Prince's court, the Grindnitza Piteinaya, Kleimanya Seny, the courts of Posadnik and Tysiatizky, the grand passage, the court house, the chapels of the foreign believers, Granaries of lords and princes, and finally the courts of wealthy boyars and burghers—all these places noted by historians could not disappear without a trace.

In the foundations of all these places still lie the pre-historic strata of life.

This is all unexplored.

Strange to say, even the Detinetz of Novgorod is unexplored with the exception of a few local excavations.

However, Detinetz is very noteworthy. Its present appearance means nothing. It has been greatly changed.

But we should bear in mind that Detinetz is an ancient place as is its square, and on the Lord's side

St. Sophia which witnessed too much.

We have records as early as 1044 that Detinetz was built of stone. The South-west part was built by prince Yaroslav; the North-east, by his son Vladimir Yaroslavich. They were princes of great culture!

Undoubtedly they left some worthy treasures.

We were going to Kolometz towards Ilmen:

From the direction of Yuriev Hermitage blew a "rolling wind". The waves lashed against the side of the boat. A wave broke overboard, and flooded the boat.

The municipal boat was shaking. We beckoned to a large fishing craft. Thus we sailed down to Kolometz.

An old fisherman held the rudder. His daughter manipulated the sails. In her copper-coloured face glittered white teeth.

We asked her "How old are you?"

"How do I know that?"

"How is it you don't know? Think it over! Remember!"

"Don't know. May be over twenty."

And there sat the hardy fisherman. Such people die, but have no ailments.

At Kolometz, the old man hurried us back. "Listen to me; I'll leave you. The boat shakes too much."

We hurried. We got in at the stern of the fisherman's sail-boat, while the cityboat with its oarsmen could not get away from shore.

Three oarsmen could not move it.

"Shall we help you? Sit down!" and the sturdy girl of Novgorod waded through the deep water.

She took hold of the boat, and with all its oarsmen easily pushed it into the deep water. She got out of the water into the stern.

A real Marfa Possadnitza.

Next to her, on the poop of the boat sat her father, a sturdy man with an aquiline nose, sharp, deep-set eyes, thin lips and beard in two curly tufts. And thus he looked sharply at the waves, trying to conquer and chastise them.

A real Ivan the Terrible.

Marfa Possadnitza! Ivan the Terrible! Everything became confusing. The meeting with primitive fishermen was evidently necessary for our impression.

Such folks still live along the lakes. They seldom go to the towns. Like the soil, thus they know how to guard the words of ancient times. As with the soil—it is difficult to know when and where to begin with these people.

All is untouched. Everywhere the luring ways of creation. Everywhere rich discoveries.

After us will come others. They will find new ways, new approaches. But no one can say that we searched in empty places. It is worthwhile to work.

It is not in distant deserts nor behind tall mountains that all is rich in discoveries, that everything awaits the hands which all gather them, that everything needs help. No, it is right here within our

reach, only three or four hours from the centre of the country. And the poor man in this case is not some unknown tramp; no, it is himself—Novgorod the Great!

Lately it has become the fashion to talk about antiquity. Everyone seems interested in it. During the past two years three societies of the lovers of antiquity have been founded; the museum of old Petersburg, the Pre-Petrian Museum of Art and Folklore, and the society for safeguarding the monuments of antiquity, whose first and excellent task it was admirably to restore and maintain the historical village of Grusino.

So much is being written at present about antiquity that we, who inaugurated this movement, are actually frightened.

Perhaps this has become merely a fad. Simply an accidental, quickly passing fashion? or is it the result of cultural development?

Only the future can give us the true verdict. Only the future will disclose the ultimate motives of those who are now preoccupied with antiquity.

Empty, unnecessary talk is one thing; an entirely different matter is that which requires knowledge, effort, outlay and love.

Let us hope that our society has approved antiquity in the dissection of sincerity and enthusiasm, of a vital study of the past in order to build a more beautiful future.

We learn to believe that:

"Those who are unaware of their past are incapable of planning their future".

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The Great Novgorod,
SUBTERRANEAN RUSSIA
by Nicholas Traverich

Let us grant that our North is poorer than other lands. Let us grant that its ancient image has vanished. Let us grant that in general very little is known of its true character. Yet, the tales of the North are profound and enchanting. The winds of the North are vigorous and joyous. The lakes of the North are dreamy, full of reverie and are its rivers. The dark forests exhale wisdom. Its green hills have witnessed the passing of many a century. Its gray stones are full of miracles. Even the Varengians come from the North. We are ever quoting beautiful ancient Russia.

Many years have gone by just in dreaming and discussing the proposed excavations in Kiev and Novgorod. The few lovers of antiquity were compelled to disquieten others and become angry themselves. Once more we were puzzled by our skeptics, and there are many of them in our country, place us in a quandary particularly as far as art and the sciences are concerned. The mask of profound skepticism serves its purpose well in many worldly affairs.

Now, instead of cold, disparaging voices we hear the vital ~~voices~~ voices of those who are devoted to the cause. Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna has shown ^A great interest in the exploration of Novgorod. Princess M.K. Tenishev has responded generously by sending in a thousand rubles to be used in this work, and Countess P.S. Uvarov in a personal conversation with me expressed her sympathy with the proposed exploration of the Kreml. The chairman of the Association of Architects and Artists, Count P.U. Suzor, has given his generous support. Assistance has also been obtained from Prince M.S. Putiatin, A.V. Shchusev, V.A. Pokrovsky, and other members of the commission of the ^{Pre-Petrin} Depetrovsky Museum.

Pre-Petrin

And now the young Depetrovsky museum may inscribe on its shield the first of its exploits:

"Excavation in the Kreml of Novgorod."

The foundation of a great undertaking was laid. There will be room for many workers and for many rubles, also for many obstacles and many victories.

The military-historical society has joined us and donated 500 rbs. to be used for the measurement of the towers and walls of the southern side of the Detinets. A special effort in favor of Novgorod was made by the secretary of the department for military archeology, N.M.Pechonkin.

It was decided to start immediately, to begin the exploration of the Kreml and in order to compare the cultural strata to make investigations in the Rurik Gorodishche.

From the very beginning, there were obstacles to overcome. Without waiting for our excavations, the municipal government of Novgorod began to excavate some trenches on the very spot assigned for the exploration. The Archive Commission and the governor were aware of it, but for some reason or other failed to take the necessary steps to prevent such action. B.Farmakovsky, member of the archeological commission visited the site and became incensed over the occurrence, and reported the action of the local authorities and the archive commission to the capital, St. Petersburg. The archeological commission demanded that court action be brought against the intruders. The Novgorod society of friends of antiquity did not protest the action of the local government vigorously enough. In general, the Novgorod inhabitants did not excel in friendliness and generosity. The result was confusion.

Only through the efforts of various scientific societies the absurd decree of the municipal government was repealed.

While the confusion, brought on through the ^{digging} ~~trenches~~ of the municipal ^{ditches} diggers, was still continuing, N.E.Makarenko, secretary of the ^{Pre-Peterson} ~~Dopetrovsky~~ museum and myself left for the Rurik Gorodishche to make an investigation. We stopped at the parochial school across the way from the stout walls of Yuriev monastery. Somewhere near this site, Aristotle Fioraventi built a bridge across the Vokhov river for Ivan the Terrible, who at that time made

his headquarters on the Gorodishche.

Besides the natives, the Novgorod princes and their families also lived here a long time, and Muscovite princes Etzars and even the Tsar himself also frequently camped on this site, although at times they set their tents on the Sharovishche where Seltso now stands, near Nereditsa. The princes' dwellings remained there for a long time. We may presume that the castle on the Gorodishche with which Peter 1st. presented Menschikov was no other than one of the ancient mansions which formerly housed the grand dukes.

A great place this is - the Gorodieshche! All around are enticing azure spaces. Below flows the dark Ilmen river. Yonder, beyond the Volkhov, lies Yuriev and the former Arkazh monastery. To the right we see the sparkling spires of St. Sophia and the brown winding ribbon of the Kreml wall. On the business bank all the churches clustered together, form one white spot. From there we can see Liadka, Volotovo, the Kirillov monastery, Nereditsa, Seltso, the Skovorodsky monastery. Nikola on the Lipna; Bronnitsa is visible beyond the forest. Everything is laid out before us as on a platter.

We look down from a mound topped by a tall cross. The place is called Nikola. Among the churches of this Gorodishche is mentioned the Nikolsky church razed "by thunder" in 1201.

We study the mound and actually find the foundation of a small wooden church, which had been burned down but evidently existed as late as the XVIII century. The objects found are all melted; all that remains is the white paint on the ground, as at Nereditsa, and the pottery^{tiles}, which shows rather fine calcination.

Of the five churches of Gorodieshche mentioned in the records only one has been preserved, the Blagoveshchensky, which was built in 1099 by Mstislav the Great, son of Vladimir Monomakh. This church housed the famous Mstislav. Nothing remains of the other churches nor of all the mansions. Even their ruins are not apparent. All that is to be seen are the colored heaps of

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bricks and lime on the steep slopes of the Volkhov river. It is quite obvious that some buildings were washed away by the river which became a furious torrent during the ice thaws. Our hypotheses are confirmed. In the vestry of the church we find a plan of Gorodishche dated 1780. The plan shows that in the course of a century or more the Volkohv river altering its ^{course} ~~route~~, had worn away about 12 sazhen of the high embankment. How greatly it must have projected them! Mansions and sections of the churches are buried in the Volkhov river. In a word, the best part of the settlement; all that was situated on the high, outlying spots. It is comprehensible now why the main portion of antique objects is found, not on the embankment, but below, near the water, during the spring. From under the banks, the local discoveries are brought to us, such as bracelets, fragments of pendants, seals, ~~beads~~ ^{fragments of} pottery and metal objects. We have now a clear idea of the breadth of the inhabited layer and the ruin of the best part of the Gorodishche. It is time for us to hasten into the Kreml.

The Kreml has been reconstructed many times. The stone wall was begun at the time of Yaroslav. It was then greatly rebuilt and finally completed during the reigns of ~~Andrey~~, the son of Alexander Nevsky, and Ivan III. The walls were restored during the reigns of Peter I and Alexander I, and finally part of the crumbling wall was rebuilt in haste on the eve of the celebration of the millenium and the dedication of its memorial.

Not so long ago the towers housed living quarters, but now the towers are almost all deserted. In the tall Kukuy the staircase is broken. The Prince's tower is supported only but its "word of honor". In the archive tower all the archives are covered with dung. Altogether it appears that the Kreml is regarded by the inhabitants of Novgorod as a sort of privy. All the towers are threatening to tumble down. Many thousands of rubles are needed not to restore them, but for slight repairs alone. In this respect too, our ancestors, so negligent in their attitude toward antiquity, left ^{us} a poor heritage.

The entire southern part of the Detinets is now filled with truck gardens. In normal times there were many buildings and about 20 churches standing on this spot; several streets and the main street of the Kreml, the Piskuplia, also passed through this spot. Somewhere near the Piskuplia was the church of St. Boris and St. Gleb erected on the site of the ancient St. Sophia which burned down. Where the vegetable patches are now there were once the buildings belonging to the prince's court and the mansion (terems) itself. As we all know, the Prince's tower led into the Prince's Court.

It is difficult to imagine this all, as you look around on this wasteland. It is difficult to believe that the ancient pictures of the Kreml tell the truth. It is difficult to believe the drawings made by foreign visitors. Comparatively recent charts (dating from the eighteenth century) still bear witness to some architectural squares in the places now occupied by the truck gardens. Where has all this disappeared. How could solid, old walls, pipes, foundations disappear completely? When were these stone foundations converted into these smooth and ^{level} ~~even~~ truck gardens? These questions seem unanswerable.

We are standing on this waste land in among peaceful cabbages. We dream of what the Detinets must have been once upon a time. From the collected historical information many deductions are possible. We already know that not much can be done with the first thousand rubles. We want to do it on a more certain, more convenient basis. At last a site is chosen for digging the long trench on the side of the Kukuy and the prince's tower. If our speculations are correct, we ought to strike some of the buildings of the prince's court. Of course, the section under the servants' quarters would be still better, but it had already been covered with new construction without any attempt at previous exploration. We of course decided to leave unmolested the plot with the ditches dug by the local government.

We began to dig. Uncertainty and even fear made themselves felt in the beginning; we were frightened by the information from Peredolsky that the

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stratum of the habitation of Novgorod, reaches a depth of 21 arshins.. The St. Petersburg "oracle" that all layers had been dug over and over again and were long since intermixed, again comes back to mind.

Beneath the alluvial cultivated stratum and very near the surface, we already come upon fragments of all sorts of building materials. Pieces of brick, colored tiles, bits of quartz, nails and braces. The building itself is not there, but you can sense its proximity. Again we suspect the gardens and buildings of the servants quarters or those of the clergy. This slack with traces of stone structures comes from there. The potsherd of the upper strata belong to recent times and go back as ^{far as} the XVI century. It is obvious that the strata are intact. A curious picture may be observed below the second arshin. Wooden frame works protrude their head, foundations of numerous densely built structures. Across the trenches in the direction of Kukuy a long scaffolding of wooden beams become visible. Perhaps this was once the wooden pavement of a street. Of course, we do not know where it ends. These frame works have been piling up on one above the other. Between them, we find a type of braces made of boards driven in erect. The buildings extend far beyond the walls of the trenches. By all means, we must reach the firm ground. We cannot afford to be diverted by an incidental wall. The objects which fall to us begin to be of greater interest. Combs, spoons, small barrels, knives, little jars, This is already ancient wooden Novgorod. Evidently we surmised correctly and we are now somewhere in the Prince's Court. We have hardly had time to make photographs, measurements and surveys of one stratum when the next one appears.

The trench ~~now~~ now presents a really phantastic sight. Both sides are covered with boards pressed into the earthen walls, the beams being both round and cut. Here a piece of scaffolding is protruding; there a small frame about an arshin and a half in size becomes visible, and there a slanting cornice is peeping out carved in the shape of a pair.

The chief problem anticipated by us has been solved; the inhabited

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strata of the Kreml proved to be ^{un}disturbed, The picture of ancient Novgorod comes to us intact. In the deserted southern part of the Kreml - provided sufficient means are available - the entire lay-out of the buildings and streets could be uncovered. Of course, large amounts of money are needed; about ten thousand rubles. But what a task would then be achieved. A truly national task! It is very doubtful however whether we will be able to obtain any sums from the government.

This will rest with private interests, with wealthy, cultured individuals. I believe that even without approaching J.P.Morgan, we will be able to obtain the necessary means for the exploration of the oldest spot in the Russian empire. There are benefactors who donate for churches, hospitals, schools. Nor is our archeological task a whim, not mere luxury. To know oneself remains as the primary objective. Upon this our future stands and falls. Once more I am taking the risk of being ridiculed, but this does not frighten me if it is done in the cause of art and beautiful antiquity. I shall expect some means to come into the Academy of Sciences for the Pre-Petriian Museum. At first, I thought I would begin with a subscription. But every subscription in itself smacks of a certain compulsion. Before undertaking anything else, without telling the people what to do, I decided to find out whether we really love our own traditions spontaneously. It will be interesting to watch whether there really will be any one, like the Princess Tenishev who would like to add to his activities another one, that of "contributing to the exploration of ancient Novgorod". Can it be that none of the great industrialists any longer remember the covenant of the Hanseatic League, with its objective of mutual help.

We are proceeding more deeply. The workers already find it difficult to dig among the mass of wooden structures. Nobody actually knows how it happened that the frame work was piled in different directions reaching layers 3-4 archins thick. If we were to judge from the potsherd we could very well imagine ourselves in the XIIIth century. Perhaps even earlier, for A.A.Spitsyn has set

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back the date of the pottery forms and ornaments more than once. The jars are similar to those found on the Dniepr near Smolensk, in the famous Varengiav hamlet of Gnezdov,

We are already completing our fifth arshin. There is no trace of firm ground so far. The workers are crowded in a small area.

"And what if the layer is ten arshins thick at this spot? What are we going to do then?" asks the puzzled Makarenko.

The first thought in this regard is about money. Will we have enough to keep going till we reach firm ground? If not, we will be unable to get a picture of the Kreml strata and all our work will be merely wasted. Thus far the work proceeds at full speed.

The second trench is excavated near the Prince's Tower which was located right near the Prince's court where some mounds and pits are visible. These are evident remains of structures. We confess that we cannot dig very deeply because of the proximity of the crumbling tower; should the tower cave in completely, even though no fault of our own, what hue and cry will arise from all our various fellow-men! But we must discover what is contained in mounds that are in sight.

After digging for not more than half a yard we hit a stone foundation. Three walls of a small square room with a brick floor laid out in squares, comes into sight. Evidently this was a structure adjacent to the tower. Besides the walls we come upon the usual discoveries; tiles, quartz. Also splinters of shells and coats of arms. The brick flooring shows a noticeable incline toward the sides. Perhaps this is a vault? We force it and underneath find clear sand, and eight inches below begins the familiar black layer of habitation. The sides of the open structures show visible signs of wooden foundations. We at once mark the debris hidden under the entire area occupied by the vegetable garden. The entire Kreml is an un-excavated kurgan.

Under the hot and cheerful July sun I watch this pleasant sight.

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Next to me stands the indefatigable N.E. Makarenko; around him the many-colored sleeves of the diggers flare up in the bright sunlight. The heaps of earth increase, heaps of black soil that has^e swallowed many a life. Near the Prince's tower, our ardent volunteers, I.B. Mikhalovsky, an engineer, a genuine lover of antiquity and V.M. Meshkov are busying themselves.

My Brother Boris is crouching close against the wall where he is ~~making~~ measurements. The surveyors, Shilovsky and Kogan are looking out of the windows of the Kukuy tower. A troop of convicts is mowing the high weeds near the wall. From the residents of Novgorod, Romantsev, Matveevsky, and Father Konkordin are indicating their interest. At least they come to watch the work.

Besides we know that on the business bank the frescoes of Peodor Stratilat are being cleaned (and well cleaned at that). At Volotov the murals are being studied and restored by ^MMissoidov, Matsulevich and Yershov.

Novgorod is evidently stirring in its sleep; somebody is making an effort to wake it up completely.

However, the joy is not of long duration, At least as far as our party is concerned. Money goes quickly. We cannot depend on the residents of Novgorod for support. Soon it will be necessary to postpone the work until new means are available.

We cannot even think of digging a new trench; and yet, there are suitable spots that seem only to be waiting for us. All those engaged in the work have only one thought; at least to hold out until we reach firm ground. With great anxiety every new stroke of the spade is watched.

We have arrived at the 6th arshin. The frame work does not end. The objects brought to the surface belong to the XII-XI centuries. From the walls of the trench, water is dripping. Every morning it has to be pumped out and carried ^{away} (in pails). It is difficult and unpleasant to work in the deep soil. Therefore, the appearance of firm ground is equally welcomed by us and by the laborers.

The firm ground appears at a depth of 6 arshins and 5 inches. We clean up the ditch and draw our conclusions.

Our expectations have not been disappointed. If I surmised it only a year ago, when I wrote that the Great Novgorod is buried intact underground, I may now assert it as a fact.

The cultural aspect of the Kreml is fully preserved and awaits its explorers. The breadth reaches from 4 to 7 arshins. The Kreml is teeming with all sorts of structures belonging to various centuries.

It is time for us to leave now. We are trying to turn the open trench over to the care of the preliminary committee of the future archeological convention, but the chairman of the committee, the local governor, has ^{not} the power to ^{oo} presume the safeguarding of our excavation until the convention meets. We will have to spend our last funds to close the trench and we will not be in a position to present the convention with the picture of the Kreml strata. What a pity!

Before parting, we take a last look at some of the ancient suburbs - Volotovo, Kovaliovo, Kholopi Gorodok, Lisichya Gora, the Viazhitsky monastery. Everyone of these spots warrants promising excavations. At Kovaliovo and on the Lisichya Gora the imposing outlines of the monastery are still quite visible. Large sums of money would, however, be required to conduct these excavations, as well as for the maintenance of the Viazhitsk monastery.

Little is known about this Viazhitsk monastery. The roads are so bad that the place is seldom visited, although the monastery itself is certainly worthy of great attention.

It is not a ^{titan} tinsel ~~betan~~, like the Yuryev monastery; not a patient frontier ^{sentinel} ~~guard~~ like the Pskov-Pechersky; not an austere protector like the Valday-Iversky. Viazhitsk monastery is different. The lonely road through the impassable arshes leads right up into the monastery. In the field nearby stands the village. The monastery is surrounded by forests and swamps. There the road ends.

In March of next year, the monastery will celebrate its 500th anniversary. It would be unfortunate if the monastery would have to mark its celebration in its present pitifully neglected condition.

The newly appointed archimandrite, Father Vischeslav, began to clean up the "inhabitable strata" from the very first day of his arrival. But money is scarce and the task before Father Vischeslav is a difficult one.

Although some rooms of the monastery still remain from the XVI century, the general appearance would rather indicate the Nikon period. It was during that period that the monastery was built up and enlarged comprising several hundred monks, and, still more important, was then decorated with excellent tile. It is pitiful to see now how the large estate of the monastery has become impoverished, the buildings cracked, the ornaments are tumbling. Let us hope that Father Viacheslov may succeed in obtaining means to support this cloister.

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