

place called Hamassien. The Bibles were eagerly read. The people say, in their memorial:—

"In the year 1868, the Lord looked mercifully down upon Hamassien, and threw, as it were, many Holy Scriptures into our houses. We took them up and read them. With great joy we assembled, read, and investigated them; and in course of time we found out the errors of our Church, and we began to lower our confidence and regard for her. Hence the priests and monks three full years spoke against us, excommunicating us, and exciting the people against us. Four times they gathered an assembly for expelling us from Hamassien. The fifth time they took us to Ras Barca, the Governor of Tigre, telling him these people must be stoned. When we were brought before him, he ordered our hands and feet to be fettered with chains. At last he said, 'Now pay me wages for your having been put in chains.' We gave him money, whereupon he freed us from chains, and said, 'Now go, and teach no more.' But we could not hereafter discontinue reading the Gospel, and speaking about it with the people; and therefore our impeachers grew more numerous. We were compelled to take refuge on the Egyptian territory."

The Egyptian climate, hot and close, did not agree with these people, accustomed to free and bracing air. Some of them accordingly returned to Hamassien, but persecution again drove them away. Among their number were three princes. The king and the bishop issued a proclamation, bestowing their blessing on those who had seized the property of the Bible readers, but ordering their hands to be cut off, and brought to them. This obliged them to extend their flight to the Egyptian desert. There they were all seized with fever, but not one died; whereas of some persons

who had come to the same neighbourhood for the sake of mineral waters, a hundred died. Their exemption from death was looked on as a kind of miracle, and led many others to inquire into their views. The reason of their persecution is stated thus, in their memorial:—

"The real cause of our being persecuted is this: 'the priests said to us, 'Do abandon the Bible; receive as true books those which we have written, and which do not agree with the Scripture. Receive the worship of the Virgin Mary, of pictures, of the Cross, and of the saints and angels, as these intercede for us, and reconcile us to God; but reject the Bible, and never speak about it to any man, else your hands and feet will be cut off.' This is the reason for which we have been persecuted, and driven to the wilderness, where we have met with great miseries."

They then state what they wish the Bible Society to do for them:—

"Now this is our petition. We wish to live in our country; plough our land with our own cattle; serve the king with our bodies; but with our souls we wish to be subject to Christ. On this occasion we entreat you, most concernedly, that you will implore our king and bishop to grant us freedom of conscience. If it cannot be done, we are like fish out of water. In every case, pray for us."

"We have three times sent letters to our king and bishop, and supplicated for freedom; but we have never received any favorable answer, and are now like sheep scattered upon the mountains, and given over to the beasts of prey, so that any one who meets us may plunder and destroy us. We, the expelled and bereft ones, are one hundred and twenty persons, and thirty-three priests and deacons. Evangelical liberty is denied to us."

The bare narrative of the facts plead for the people very strongly.