

Ninety and Nine.

There were ninety and nine that safely lay
In the shelter of that fold,
But one was out on the hills away,
Far off from the gates of Gold:
Away on the mountains wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd's care.

"Lord, Thou hast here Thy ninety and nine,
Are they not enough for Thee?"
But the Shepherd made answer:
"This of Mine
Has wandered away from me;
And although the road be rough
and steep,
I go to the desert to find my sheep."

But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Nor how dark the night that the Lord passed through
Ere he found His sheep that was lost.

Out in the desert He heard its cry—
Sick, and helpless, and ready to die.

"Lord, whence are those blood-drops
all the way?"
That mark out the mountain's track?"
"They were shed for one who had gone astray
Ere the Shepherd could bring him back."

"Lord, whence are Thy hands so rent and torn?"
"They are pierced to-night by many a thorn."

And all through the mountains, thunder-riven,
And up from the rocky steep,
There rose a cry to the gate of Heaven,
"Rejoice! I have found My sheep!"

And the Angels echoed around the throne—
"Rejoice, for the Lord brings back His own!"

St. Boniface's Life Work.

CONCLUDED.

St. Boniface was by no means a mere enthusiast, but a seasoned and matured man of forty years, who had been a successful professor in several monasteries of his order, had taken prominent part in church councils, had proved himself competent in important diplomatic missions, above all he was a priest of unblemished reputation, a zealous catechist and preacher, condescending and affable towards everyone and his many friends saw him depart with sadness. Although knowing all this from other sources we would wish to have it from the most authoritative source, his own bishop. The contents of the first letter has not come down to us, but that of the other letter we know. It was a rather short appeal to the love and the hospitality of those to whom it would be given to read. The reward of patriarchs of old is held out "if you render love and assistance to the bearer of this letter, the pious priest and servant of God, Winfried."

What emotions may have passed through the soul of Gregory II. as with the keenness of a great mind he studied the letter of Bishop Daniel. Was this monk perhaps a chosen instrument of Divine Providence? About one hundred and twenty years before Gregory I, the Great, had sent St. Augustine to the Anglo-Saxons to plant the gospel among that pagan people. The seed had taken root and grown abundantly. This monk Winfried (Boniface) was evidently one of the choicest fruits of the new garden of God. Could it be possible that he himself, Gregory II, were to do something similar for Germany? Was perhaps this Anglo-Saxon monk destined to become the Augustine of Germany?

The impression which the letter and its bearer made on the Pope is clearly seen from the fact that for

weeks if not for months daily conferences took place.

The letter which contains the Pope's authorization is dated May 15, 720. After a few preliminary remarks concerning the Apostle's former life the Pope writes: "Since, therefore, thou appearest to glow with the salutary fire which the Lord has come to send upon earth: We, in the name of the Indivisible Trinity, through the unshaken authority of Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, whose doctrine it is Our charge to teach and whose Holy See is in Our keeping appoint thee and command, that thou shalt announce to all nations detained in the errors of unbelief, to which with God's help thou wilt be able to proceed, the mystery of the Kingdom of God, and conquer them by His Truth; thou shalt in an appropriate manner instill into their rude minds the teachings of both Testaments, that is, the spirit of virtue, charity, and frugality."

Two special charges are given him: "To conform strictly to the ceremonial of the Roman Church in administering holy baptism; and to have recourse always to the authority of Rome in any of the difficulties that might arise."

All who read the above passages carefully will notice the comprehensive terms of the Pope's instructions. No special nation or tribe is mentioned. The country which St. Boniface had in view was a land only imperfectly known to him. His first journey therefore was very much in the nature of an exploration tour. He was hospitably received by the Lombard King Liutprand, though this ruler at times was quite hostile to the Pope. Then he passed through Bavaria, where Christianity had already gained a foothold, and came to Thuringia, which was still a stronghold of paganism. It is quite easy to understand that he first wished to study the condition of his territory. But in Thuringia he really began his missionary labors among the few Christians and priests he found there.

There he received news that the inimical chief of the Frisians, Radbod, had died. He saw in this a sign of Providence pointing to Friesland, where he had already labored, but with so little success. In a dream, moreover, the Lord appeared to him bidding him help at once to garner the ripe harvest. Arrived there he found at Utrecht his venerable old friend Willibrord, who had just returned to his diocese to repair the havoc wrought by Radbod. The aged bishop was overjoyed at the arrival of the young and zealous co-worker, who also had received a special mission from the center of Christendom. For three years Boniface now again labored with him, destroying idols, building churches, founding monasteries and converting large numbers of heathens. Willibrord had now reached eighty years, and what was more natural than that he saw in the well-trained, courageous and saintly co-worker his own successor. But Boniface could not be induced to restrict his labors to a single diocese. He had received from the Pope a general mission field which would have to be given up, if he was to become Bishop of Utrecht. He also mentioned his lack of years, although he was then but forty-two years old. During this time his own plans had also matured. With sorrow he parted from the aged bishop and hastened into the interior of Germany by way of Treves.

He was now at the beginning of his life's work. "He rejoiced like a giant to run his way." (Ps. 18, 8.) It was a way of the cross lasting thirty years, but also a way of victory. Only two years later Pope Gregory II called him to Rome and made him bishop before he sent him back to his German forests. Twenty years later, Boniface le

came Archbishop and Papal Legate for all the countries north of the Alps.

But he never forgot his first field of labor. As an old man of over seventy years he returned to Friesland, and it was there that he closed his memorable life, dying a martyr's death after the example of the apostles of old.

—Cath. Tribune.

The Bishops in Alsace-Lorraine

(By J. C. Walsh, in 'America'.)

"By a decision taken on the proposition of the President in Council, Minister of War, dated April 22, Mgr. Ruth, Bishop of Nancy, is named to the bishopric of Strasbourg and Mgr. Pelt, Vicar General, is named to the bishopric of Metz."

This brief announcement appeared in the Paris evening papers of Thursday April 24, dated April 25 so as to give the Parisians a comforting sense of being well ahead of the times.

There had been no announcement that either the Bishop of Strasbourg or the Bishop of Metz had resigned, and yet here was M. Clemenceau, in the midst of his preoccupations, appointing their successors. It turns out however, that the Pope also counted for something in the matter, although no mention of that was made in the official announcement.

No sooner had it become clear that Alsace and Lorraine were to be restored to France than both ecclesiastical and administration circles began to manifest concern about the future of the sees of Strasbourg and Metz. A very highly placed personage, not M. Clemenceau, intimated to a prelate in Paris that not only must the laws of France apply to Alsace and Lorraine, but that the two bishops must go. If necessary they would be exiled. This appeared to be a rather brusque method of approach to the solution of what might be a difficult problem. Alsace and Lorraine were included in the concordat arranged between the Vatican and the France of Napoleon I. During the German occupation the concordat continued in operation, and the people of the restored provinces have not been parties to the anti-clerical legislation of the past 15 years. Moreover, they have had definite assurances from President Poincaré and from Marshal Joffre that their status would be respected. As to the proposal to dismiss the Bishops, there was an important adverse precedent. After 1870 the Bishop of Metz remained in office for many years, and Bishop Dupont des Loges continued to be so good a Frenchman that recently M. Poincaré, Marshal Foch and General Petain selected his tomb as a fit spot for reaffirming the unity of the provinces with France. It was not for this quality that he was retained in his office; he was a good bishop who was loved by his flock. But so is Bishop Benzler. I have been assured on very high authority that it would be impossible for Rome to offer any satisfactory reason for requesting Bishop Benzler to vacate his see.

Nevertheless, it was inevitable that there should be conversations between France and the Vatican in regard to the new situation in France, and it seemed probable that other issues than those arising in Alsace and Lorraine might be involved. There was a suggestion at one time that France might accredit an ambassador to the Vatican, but this idea was abandoned. Then it was suggested that as France had taken the hostile initiative against the Church, it was the part of France to make the first move towards a better understanding for the future. This suggestion was also rejected, out of deference to the assumed intractability of the Chamber of Deputies. In point of

fact the ice was broken when, after the attempt upon the life of M. Clemenceau, Cardinal Gasparri sent, through Cardinal Amette, of Paris, a message of sympathy to the wounded Premier. Cardinal Amette was on the eve of a visit to Rome and it is assumed that he laid before the Vatican authorities his view of the situation in France. Meantime, the Bishops of Metz and Strasbourg had informed the Holy Father of their willingness to be guided by his decisions, and had offered to resign from their sees if in his judgment the welfare of the Church would thereby be promoted.

It would appear that in the judgment of the Pope the situation was not one in which a first friendly move from France should be insisted upon; but that, on the contrary, it was right and proper to conform, with the assent of the two Bishops most concerned, to the national desire of the people of Alsace and Lorraine to have the Church in the two provinces brought into the most direct relations with the Church of France. The resignations of the two Bishops were therefore accepted, their successors were designated, and in due season the French Government acted in consonance with the terms of the concordat as administered prior to 1870. I gather that any alteration of method which may have been made since 1870 were ignored. The Pope has therefore made the first friendly gesture. It remains to be seen in what way it will be answered by France.

In the meantime, the Catholics of Alsace and Lorraine are organizing for the defence of their own religious interests. Accustomed under the German régime to support the German Catholic party, they are now meeting and making preparations to carry the same policy into the French elections, and there need be no doubt that when the time comes for the new Chamber to meet the restored provinces will be represented there by a delegation united in the determination to see that the Catholic life of their people shall not be invaded or disturbed by emissaries of an anti-Catholic cult sent from Paris for the purpose. As a beginning a petition is being circulated, which within a few weeks will receive the signatures of practically the whole population, proclaiming their right to continue without interference the régime, in regard to the practice of religion, which has given universal satisfaction. The right to continue the present system of confessional schools is especially insisted upon. A few days spent in Alsace were enough to convince me, at any rate, that there is a surprise in store for whoever in Paris or elsewhere, believes in the possibility of establishing there an exotic system under which the schools would be made a deliberate and permanent instrumentality for depriving the children of the religion dear to their parents. Some of the politicians have had their lesson already, for in villages where the new teacher proposed to substitute the new for the old method, the people simply withdrew their children, and there was no teaching to be done until a satisfactory change was arranged.

What struck me as odd, however, was the equanimity with which even the most substantial amongst the clergy accepted idea of the centralization. They were very positive in their objection to undesirable teachers and very practical in their methods of correcting abuses, but the idea that was the right of those responsible for the children to select the teacher apparently did not weigh very strongly with them. Perhaps this is an indication of the European habit of looking to centralized authority. Perhaps it is only a passing symptom, for one plank in the political platform now being constructed calls for recognition of the confessional system in

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