

A small number of converts is drawn by preaching, but the present is a sowing rather than a reaping time. For years past the circulation of the Bible has been large, and, for the most part, annually growing larger. Italy is very poor, and the willingness of the people to purchase not only portions of Scripture, but entire Testaments and in many cases even Bibles, is a somewhat notable sign of progress. Tracts also are largely read; and in particular the Claudian Press at Florence sends annually forth a large number of truly evangelical publications. As we have already indicated, the importance of the press continually increases as education spreads.

If space permitted, we could give many interesting and some striking details, all proving that the faithful preaching and reading of the Word of God retain in Italy all their immemorial power over the human heart.

Yet one thing must be glanced at ere we close. In the case of the venerable Church of the Valleys, which has the largest share of the work of evangelization, there has recently been granted a most cheering token of good things to come. Spiritual life in the valleys had in many cases become faint and low; even family worship was frequently neglected, and the lay members of the Church took little or no interest in the work of the pastors; but of late there has been a truly remarkable change. The Rev. W. Meille, the worthy son of a worthy father, has been especially blessed in his efforts to revive spiritual life among the congregations; and his labors have been heartily seconded by the pastors generally. In a spiritual sense we may almost say regarding the Church of the Valleys that the winter is past, the reviving breath of spring is moving over the land, and on every side bud and blossom are bursting into life.

Our earliest recollections of the valleys carry us as far back as the year 1846. We remember especially one Lord's day afternoon, on which we

stood gazing at the glorious mountains along with two admirable men, since gathered to their rest, Messrs. Malan and Meille, when, pointing toward Monte Viso, one of them exclaimed: "Yonder is the spot where in 1828 Felix Neff, having come across the Alps, fell on his knees as he came in sight of Italy and poured out his soul in supplication that God would hasten the time when the pure Gospel might be preached over the whole of the dark land. We are waiting for that time. We believe it is at hand. We pray that we may be ready for it. Up to that time the Waldenses had been shut up in their mountain fastnesses, but soon after the House of Savoy discarded its old policy of persecution, and the high work of proclaiming the pure Gospel over Italy was earnestly taken up, first by the emancipated Waldenses and then by various other bodies. Last year about fifteen hundred converts joined the Protestant missions. But members have been lost as well as gained. A good many have died. Not a few have emigrated. Large numbers of Italy leave their country, especially for South America. Three Waldensian pastors, if we mistake not, minister to their expatriated countrymen there.

We may note one important difference between the change now going on and that which occurred three centuries ago. Italy did not remain entirely unaffected by the great Reformation which shook the rest of Europe. The agitation, however, extended only to a portion of the upper classes and a few literary men. The great body of the Italian people did not feel it, and indeed hardly knew anything about it. Soon the relentless Inquisition triumphed all over Italy. Some converts were joined to the noble army of martyrs; others were forced to flee from Italy, and up to this day the land, save in the Waldensian retreats, has remained Romanist in name and semi-pagan in fact. Now the religious change is seen almost exclusively among the common people. The influence of it spreads for the most