

JEWISH MISSION.

ALEXANDRIA.

We have the pleasure of giving in this number the first half-yearly report by the Rev. J. W. Yule of his labours at this station, and we are sure that it will be read with much interest by all the friends of the Mission. We trust that all will, by the perusal of it, be stirred up to greater earnestness, and more fervent prayers that God would arise and plead His own cause, and that soon both Jew and Gentile may be led to embrace Christ Jesus as their Saviour as He is freely offered in the Gospel,

The First Half-Yearly Report of Operations connected with the Church of Scotland's Mission at Alexandria, Egypt, under the direction of the Committee for the Conversion of the Jews.

In presenting this Report to the Committee it may be well to premise that, on entering on the work, I proposed to myself its division into three distinct branches of labour.

1st. By the establishment of schools,—the visitations of families,—the distribution of Bibles and tracts,—meeting with inquirers, and other general missionary operations,—to seek as a primary object the conversion of Israel.

2d. To afford, by the dispensation of "word and sacraments" in English, an opportunity of worshipping God, according to the simple dignity of the Presbyterian form, to such residents as may desire it.

3d. By the preaching of the Gospel to, and the visitation of, the seamen frequenting the harbour, to bring the means of grace within the reach of a class of men to whom all are indebted, but for whose spiritual welfare comparatively few care.

Although this was the scheme of labour laid out, I regret that the first of these plans has for a variety of reasons been almost held in abeyance. A new language or rather new languages have now to be acquired, for there seems to be no end to the number of tongues spoken in Alexandria; teachers for schools have to be obtained, and several other things are required before the Jewish field can be properly entered on.

Three weeks ago I visited, in company with a Jewish merchant, the "Excelsio e Reverendo Sig. Rabbino M. Hazan," as he styles himself in Italian,—the chief rabbi in Egypt. He received us with urbanity, and talked freely on every point except Christianity, the very mention of which aroused his anger. On the subject of the Jews' admission to the British Parliament being mentioned, he said, he thanked God for that, and further told me that he had prepared a prayer for the Queen of England which he had commended to be used in the several congregations under his care. At the termination of the visit I asked liberty to call again, which he granted, and also gave me a copy of a "Pervezione" in Italian, which he had delivered on the occasion of his installation into his present office.

The second plan of labour has been fully entered on, and with a most gratifying measure of success.

Shortly after arriving here, I was able to make arrangements for holding service on the afternoon of each Lord's day in the Prussian chapel, which I hired for that purpose at a rent of £12 per annum, and on the 29th of March the first meeting for worship was held.

Hand-bills announcing the service were circulated during the previous week, and a considerable number attended. Since then worship has been regularly continued, and a steady congregation has given evidence that the preaching of the Gospel has been relished by them.

During the time there have been three baptisms connected with the Mission: one the child of a convert from Popery.

On September 12th the Lord's Supper was dispensed,—the number of communicants being eleven.

In connexion with the congregation, I have organised a monthly prayer meeting, which is held in my house, and which, perhaps, is the first and only thing of the kind in Egypt.

Our first meeting was held on the 9th June, and our last on the 12th inst. At the former eighteen individuals were present, and at the latter, twenty-six. One pleasing feature of these meetings is that every month the attendance has increased, and there does seem to be an interest felt in them by those who attend. May we realise the influence of the Spirit in them, and then they will be productive of much good!

There is another corner of the congregational field which, as yet, lies almost untouched. I refer to the engineers living along the line of the Suez railway. I am anxious to make stated visits to them, and I have procured liberty from the Government to travel free, but, hitherto, it has been quite out of my power to get at them. I trust, however, shortly to make an endeavour in that direction.

The third department, or that belonging to the harbour, has features of interest and encouragement peculiar to itself, and is a field in itself which would fully occupy the time of a missionary.

Some idea of the importance of the place may be gathered from the fact that between eleven and twelve thousand seamen, sailing under the British flag, annually visit this port, bringing imports to the amount of £1,301,181, and carrying away exports of the value of £1,856,808. The total of all nations being,—imports £2,850,983, and exports £3,573,548.

Until my arrival little or nothing was done consecutively for the spiritual instruction of this vast number of individuals by any denomination of professing Christians. Occasional Bethel services were held, but no uniform course of action was pursued. While, however, the Church slumbered, the devil was awake and busy in employing every agency for the ruin of men's souls. Grog shops and houses of infamy abound in Alexandria, and the keepers of these employ "donkey-boys" to await "Jack" at the landing-places, and to allure him to those dens of iniquity.

Through the kindness of Captain Rycie, I was able to obtain the use of the *Margaret*, a coal-depot, belonging to Messrs. Burns and Maciver (the well-known shipping agents of Liverpool), for the purpose of holding Bethel services, and on March 21st I began the work.

Thirty-six persons were present, and I felt much encouraged at making so good a beginning.

Every Lord's day since, with two exceptions, the services have been continued, and, in addition, four week evening services have been held on as many vessels lying in the harbour.

As might be expected, the number in attendance at these services has varied considerably. Once or twice it was as low as five or six, and again there have been about two hundred present.

Being deeply impressed with the necessity of working this department well, the idea occurred to me of having a Scripture reader to visit the sailors during the week. By this arrangement a considerable portion of my time would be spared for other matters, and a larger agency employed.

Accordingly at the conclusion of one of our services in June I made a statement of my views on the matter, and recommended the commencement of a subscription list, to defray

the expenses connected with the employment of such a person.

On the following day a book was put in circulation, and the subscription begun; and now, in the course of four months, there has been collected the sum of £53, solely from the captains and crews of vessels, for the above object.

It ought also to be mentioned here that when my pulpit gown was stolen from the chapel, the seamen, of their own accord, subscribed £4, 5s., and sent it to me to buy a new one. The liberality thus displayed by the sons of the ocean is highly gratifying. Would that they might all become partakers of the true riches which are enduring!

Before concluding this report, I wish to lay a statement of the wants of the Mission before the Committee, and through them, before the members of the Church, in the hope that some friend may be stirred up to remember this part of the vineyard.

I do most heartily rejoice that our Church was led to take up Egypt as a sphere of missionary labour; but it is, as yet, only the day of small things. Why should we not attempt greater things? Why should we not establish and sustain a Mission equal to the openings which present themselves? And, seeing that various agencies are required, why should we not have them in proportion to the demand.

1st. For the Jewish department, we want teachers of English, Italian, Arabic, with the necessary school requisites of books, maps, &c.

2d. For the English congregation, we want a more central and comfortable place of worship than we now possess.

3d. For the harbour we require an earnest, devoted man,—a person who has been at sea and otherwise qualified, would be preferable.

4th. I am in very great want of a large supply of short, pithy, searching tracts for circulation.

I know that all these things require money; but surely there are many in Scotland, possessed of the means, who are ready to extend a helping hand to us.

I would put in a special claim for aid in the name of the Bethel department in the hope that the owners of vessels trading to this port, and the merchants who amass wealth by commercial transactions with this country, would respond to it.

5th. Above and beyond all, we want prayer on our behalf. "Brethren, pray for us." We have sore trials to encounter—trials to our faith, to our patience, to our perseverance. We are tried by the magnitude of the work, and the insufficiency of the means we possess for accomplishing it. We are tried by the perverseness and indifference of those among whom we labour, and by the great difficulty of awakening them to the reality of eternal things. We are tried by the comparatively small measure of success with which we meet. "Brethren, pray for us." Pray that we may be kept from the influence of a worldly spirit. Pray that we may never lose that sensibility, which we ever ought to maintain, respecting the condition of unrenewed men. Pray that we may be upheld in seasons of trial, and preserved in the time of temptation. Pray that we may be in word and deed, in charity, faith and purity living examples to Jews and Gentiles. Finally pray that in Egypt the Church of our fatherland may be honoured in bringing many sons and daughters to God.

J. W. YULE.

ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT,
Oct. 28th, 1858.