

and providing well-trained teachers. The handsome church in Turin, of which Mr. Melle is pastor, and which cost £10,000 sterling, was the sole gift of General Beckwith. His widow—a native of the valleys—still lives in La Tour, and with her daughter devotes herself to the work her late husband loved so well.

THE SYNOD

or supreme court of the Waldenses meets yearly in the first week in September at La Tour, the form of procedure and constitution being nearer the Presbyterian than any other form of ecclesiastical polity. The Synod comprises all the regular pastors with two deputies from the sixteen parishes, including Turin. The "Table" is the name given to a board or executive commission, made up of two pastors and three laymen, elected by the Synod for the purpose of carrying into effect its decisions. The lowest church court is the "Consistory," and is composed of the pastor, elders, one or more deacons and a legal adviser. The members of the several churches have the right of selecting their own pastors, of whom there are eighteen in the valleys. In addition to these are six *emeriti*, and several who minister to congregations in Nice, Marseilles, Paris, etc. Of the seven professors in the college five are ministers and two laymen; of the two professors in the normal school one is a minister and one a layman, and a similar arrangement prevails in the grammar school at Pousaret, making the total number of pastors and ministers in the valleys thirty-five.

THE PASTORS' INCOMES

were until recently nominally sixty pounds per annum, supplemented by a manse, garden, and in some cases by meadow pasture for a cow. After deducting eight pounds for taxes exacted by the State, the actual sum received was only fifty-two pounds! Of this pittance only one-tenth was contributed by the parish, the remainder being made up of the proceeds of funds collected two centuries ago in England and Holland. From the days of Cromwell to the present time there has existed a strong bond of sympathy between Britain and the inhabitants of these mountains. The different branches of the Presbyterian churches in Scotland have repeatedly shown their interest by sending gifts of money, and last year the General Presbyterian Council succeeded in raising and remitting to Mr. Malan the banker in Turin the sum of £12,000, the interest of which is to be devoted to increasing the stipends of the parish clergy. A similar effort is being made in England, the Rev. Mr. Worsfold, rector of a parish in Yorkshire, taking an active share in the work. The people of the valleys are really unable suitably to support their pastors. They are a hardy and most industrious race, but summer there is short, and incessant toil is needed to gather in the scanty crops, ere the rains of autumn descend, and the snows of winter cover up the ground. It is interesting, though painful, to see what expedients have to be adopted to rescue little patches of earth from the sides of the hills, whereon to raise a little rye or to cultivate a few stunted vines. Terrace after terrace, many of them not exceeding ten feet in breadth, are built on the slopes of the mountains, and enclosed by walls of stone to prevent the earth from being washed into the meadows. Even where the soil is more fertile the labour needed is toilsome and the results often discouraging. The only means most of the people have of carrying their hay, corn and wood to places of security are large baskets fastened to the backs of men and women by straps around the shoulders and breasts. In the higher valleys most of the patches of vineyards are on rocks covered with earth, carried in the first instance from the plains below, and kept in its place by the constant watchfulness and labour of the vinedresser. And yet poor as these people undoubtedly are, it is gratifying to learn that they have managed to raise £3,551 to add to the sums received from Scotland and America.

SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS.

Poorly as the pastors are paid, the school teachers are still worse paid, some of them receiving for eight months' work a sum equivalent to only eleven or twelve pounds. In each parish there is at least one good school, but in addition there are many *coles des quartiers* which are taught in the hamlets during the winter months when the country is buried deep in snow, and the people unable to move far from their houses. The number of children attending the day schools, according to the last report I have seen was 4,622, and Sunday schools 2620. (The population is a little over 25,000.) I should particularly ask attention to the

POMARET GRAMMAR SCHOOL

which is situated at the entrance of the valley of St. Martin, the most northerly and highest of all the valleys, some parts of it being covered with snow during six months of the year. The inhabitants are very poor, but are described as a "hardy, God-fearing race," and it is the children of this people who supply the largest number of ministers and evangelists to the Waldensian Church. It is this fact which gives special interest to this school where the young lads commence their first acquaintance with the classics. Boys from all parts of the valley come here, and while pursuing their studies endure privations of the most painful character. The larger part of the youth come from such distances as to compel them to take up their abode in and around Pomaret from October until the end of the following June. Many of these have no other lodging during their stay, than a stable where the proprietor permits them to pass the night. "They bring with them," writes Dr. Stewart, "a certain amount of black rye bread, and if the season has been favourable a sack of potatoes, which is made into a *soup maigre*, in which they dip their hard rye bread. This is not a sufficient nurture for a growing lad at the age when he stands most in need of substantial food, and the effect of this semi-starvation not only tells upon their intellectual energies at the time, but has in many cases produced feeble health and even early death, after the student has finally struggled through all his difficulties and has entered on his work as a minister of the Gospel." Dr. Lantaret, who is the head of the school, and who acts as a father to the pupils, says that many of these lads never tasted butcher-meat during the time they were at school. When this was made known it excited sympathy, and money was supplied from abroad to procure for the most necessitous a substantial meal at least twice a week. The effect of this is said to have been marvellous, not only in improving their physical appearance, but in giving increased vigour to their intellectual faculties. I learn that no fewer than thirteen lads have entered the school this winter, all having passed a creditable examination, but whose families, from the failure of crops, are in such poverty as to be unable to afford the small expense which keeping them at Pomaret entails. Are not there some Canadian parents, who, when they look on the healthy faces of their own dear children, would like to do something for these poor pale-faced, half-starved lads who may yet be spared to become active workers in a noble cause? A small sum would suffice to give at least one substantial meal a week to each of these thirteen boys. At the head of this valley of St. Martin are several interesting historical spots had I space to refer to them. I must, however, at least name the village of

BALSILLE,

where Henri Arnaud, the Huguenot pastor and the 800 Vaudois, the sole survivors of the 3,000 who had been obliged to fly for their lives into Switzerland, first arrived after the "glorious return"—one of the most remarkable journeys, all things considered, ever performed. In another nook of the mountains stands the old Vaudois temple of Prali, to which Arnaud and his men marched the following day to record their feelings of gratitude by singing together the 79th and 129th Psalms.

THE VALLEY OF ANGROGNA

is the central one, and contains many historical localities to which attach memories which will not soon be forgotten. A summer's day will suffice for the tourist to see most of them. After quitting La Tour on his northward ascent, he will first turn aside a few steps to look at the old church of Chabas, which was built before Reformation times, and is one of the oldest, if not the very oldest, in the valleys. Higher up he will arrive at the Manse of Angrogna, where he will receive a hearty welcome from Signor Bonnet, who, if at leisure, may possibly accompany him to other portions of his parish, and relate to him on the way their romantic stories. He will first, however, show him his Angrogna church, which dates from 1555, but which has been many times repaired. It stands in one of the loveliest spots imaginable, and will serve as a specimen of all the temples. The building is of the plainest possible character, both inside and outside. It has an immensely high pulpit, with an equally high gallery opposite to it, where stands the harmonium, or organ, for, staunch Presbyterians as all the valley-men are, they don't object to organs, though few of them are rich enough to possess one. On one side

of the pulpit is a bench for the elders, and on the other one for the deacons, and, as in most continental churches, the men sit on one side of the main aisle, and the women on the other. Higher up the Valley Mr. Bonnet has two other churches, in which he preaches at certain times; one at the hamlet of La Serre, and still further in the heart of the hills, and in an almost inaccessible spot, at

PRA DEL TOR.

This impregnable citadel of the Waldenses lies at the bottom of a valley, surrounded by frightful precipices, a difficult path winding among and around the rocks, being the only outlet by which visitors can enter or depart from it. Here it was that the Vaudois students used to be trained in their theological studies by the "Barbes," who took the Bible (in MSS) as their text-book, all being seated in the open air around a flagstone table which still remains. And here, too, met in the olden time, secure from observation, the pastors and their *anciens* in annual session, with their moderator at their head. It was at this "circle of the meadow" that, in 1561, six resolute Waldenses put to flight the hosts of Count La Trinita. "The assailants," says Monastier, "withdrawing from that narrow and bloody ravine, as a traitor should always withdraw from his own snares, shattered, mangled, defeated and powerless." How heartily must the survivors on that occasion have joined in singing a hymn of triumph, corresponding to those noble verses of Mrs. Hemans, the first of which is:—

"For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our Fathers' God!
Thou hast made Thy children mighty
By the touch of the mountain sod;
Thou hast fixed our isle of refuge
Where the spoiler's foot ne'er trod—
For the strength of the hills we bless Thee,
Our God, our fathers' God!"

Until three years ago, there was no suitable place of worship in this picturesque spot. Now, however, on the brow of a lofty rock overlooking the bed of the Angrogna, stands a church, owing chiefly to the exertions of the Rev. Mr. Worsfold, who collected more than £1,000 for its erection. The materials had all to be carried on the shoulders of the people from the valley below—and in this way they contributed their share of the cost. At the opening of this temple three years ago, as many as 2,000 people assembled, Mr. Bonnet and Mr. Worsfold conducting the services in the open air, with a blue Italian sky above, and the "everlasting hills" around. There are many other spots in this valley to which I would fain introduce the reader, such as the "Temple Cavern," in which the persecuted used to seek refuge "on all fours," after scrambling down the precipice a distance of 100 feet; but space forbids—we must now descend again, and after taking a look at the *casteluzzo* rock which overlooks the Temple Valdese at La Tour, regretfully leave the valleys. From this rock was given the signal in 1665, at four o'clock in the morning, to commence a general massacre, the horrors of which no words can adequately describe. It was on this occasion that Milton wrote that noble sonnet which stirred the hearts of multitudes in all Protestant countries, and brought immediate sympathy and succour to the Vaudois:

"Avenge, O Lord! Thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
Forget not—"

In my next letter I shall give some account of the "Libera Chiesa," or her Italian Church, and of their work of evangelization in Italy. T. H.

Dresden, Saxony, 12th December, 1882.

ARE OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROTESTANT?

MR. EDITOR,—I have shown in my former letters that in the Bible read, the commandments taught, and the prayers prescribed for use in our public schools, the teaching is undoubtedly Protestant, and is regarded as such by Roman Catholics. The following educational notes are quite in harmony with all that I have advanced on this subject. "The head master of the high school at Orillia, writing to his board, says:—'Complaints have been made that the school is not opened with prayer. As the school is mixed and of different denominations, I think it better to omit the opening with prayer than to introduce a denominational (Protestant) religious exercise, which might be offensive to some of the pupils or their parents.' The Board, in considering the report, passed a resolution