

Gleanings from a Corner of the South American Mission Field.

BY REV. WILLIAM C. MORRIS.*

BOCA, BUENOS AYRES, ARGENTINE REPUBLIC.

IN the countries of almost unknown, half-forgotten, neglected South America the hand of the Lord is working. These young nations are passing through an experience hitherto unknown in their history. In facilities for missionary work, in God-prepared spheres of labor, in their readiness to receive the truth, in the prophecies of abundant, prompt, and accumulative harvest, these fields are probably almost unique to-day. The following jottings, relating in part to the Boca mission work, and in part to South American countries in general, may be of interest:

DYING WITH CANDLE AND CRUCIFIX.

Some of our Boca converts came one day to tell me of a poor girl who was dying. Of their own accord they had seen her parents, and had obtained their consent for me to speak and pray with her. It seemed to these dear people so awful for anyone to pass away without hearing of the Saviour. I found the poor girl in an almost dying condition. Long wax candles were standing in a row around the bed, which were kept burning night and day; a large picture of some saint hung upon the wall at the foot of the bed; a crucifix lay upon the bedclothes; a pierced heart, made of some bright metal, lay upon her breast, and the atmosphere of the room was dense with the smoke of incense. A priest had been once, and had refused to come again, the people being too poor to pay for many visits. Neither the visit of the priest, the picture, the crucifix, the pierced heart nor the incense had brought resignation to the heart of the parents, nor satisfaction and rest to the departing one. Her large dark eyes were fixed on me with that wistfulness and enquiry which told me at once that she longed to rest in Christ. She was unable to speak, but in such cases the very soul seems to look forth from the eyes, and eloquently, though silently, tell its want of that which it feels to be its greatest need. On three different occasions I endeavored gently and simply to point her to Jesus. A number of friends of the family were always present at these visits, and appeared intensely interested. They all knelt reverently during prayer, and it was easy to see (as they afterwards said) that they had never heard anything of the love of God before. The poor girl passed away, and on the day following, at three in the afternoon, I held a funeral service at the house. Some members of our native congregation had invited their neighbors to this service, and the novelty of the idea excited curiosity, and brought together a large number of persons. Between one and two hundred were present, most of whom were strangers. The service was held in the large yard surrounding the house, as the room was very small. The singing at what was known to be a funeral service attracted many from the surrounding yards, and these listened—some from the doors of their houses, some sitting upon the walls and on the roofs of the huts around us. A number were in tears while I spoke. The truth of *free salvation* touched the hearts of many, who before had understood that they must obtain forgiveness in return for money given to the priest. The thought of immediate happiness after death instead of ages of purgatory, the teaching, that the gates of heaven

were opened wide to all who would take the Lord Jesus as Saviour, the thought of the mercy and love of God being theirs in place of his vengeance and hatred, was overpowering in its tenderness and sweetness. Through this service many were brought to the mission hall services, and some have since found the Saviour. The parents did not continue with us. The fact that many left the Romish Church as the result of this funeral service, so enraged the priests and nuns that they sought by threats and wiles to cause them to return, and to hinder in every possible way the progress of the Gospel. A few were terrified into yielding, and among these the parents.

To know the undying hatred of the Romish system for the Bible, one needs to go to South America. Volumes would be necessary to tell the story of the opposition everywhere presented to the colporteur and the evangelical missionary; and of the persecution to which many are subjected who attend evangelical services or obtain a Bible or Testament. Bribes, threats, falsehood and coercion are the weapons which are unsparingly made use of.

ARGENTINE PEOPLE.

After an experience of about seven years among the Argentine people in missionary work, and having lived among them for more than fifteen years before my conversion, and having met many who know the other peoples of South America, I am deeply convinced that the supreme need of the people of South America is the knowledge of God as revealed by Jesus Christ, and while their ignorance and darkness are at times most discouraging, their willingness to receive and obey the light of truth as it dawns upon them is very encouraging. Men and women in their homes, travellers on steamboats and trains, laborers, tram-conductors and drivers, policemen, soldiers, are all glad to receive books, tracts, and obtain Bibles or Testaments, and listen to the Gospel story.

The frank, communicative nature of the people causes them, after conversion, to freely tell others of the joy which they have found in the Lord Jesus. Would that this spirit everywhere prevailed! Owing to this, many remarkable streams of blessing have flowed through the most unexpected channels. A woman who came to a knowledge of the Saviour at the Mission Hall was so rejoiced and full of desire to tell all whom she knew of what she had found, that she left a number of home duties undone for a few days in order to find out her relatives and friends who lived in different parts of the city, and after many long conversations she succeeded in persuading several of them to attend the services. Three of these are now walking in the way of holiness. Her mother and younger sister, Amelia, who is about nineteen years of age, lived in a distant part of the country, and she wrote to them to come to the city for a few days, and stay at her house so as to attend the services. They came. Both were much interested; and on their return home Amelia took with her a Bible, and I have since received letters from this young lady telling me that she is trusting in Jesus, and that she loved to read the Bible and pray. Her friends ridicule her, priests and nuns persecute her, but she says that if the Lord helps her she will never let her Bible go. We know of four or five who have, through this one woman, been brought to the Saviour.

SPIRITUALISM AND ROMANISM.

One night a group of spiritualists entered our hall during the service with no friendly purpose, but the outcome of their visit and subsequent public agitation and calumnies

*Rev. W. C. Morris is a Methodist missionary from Great Britain to South America.