

have been issued. During the first week in May several hundreds of cases, each weighing three or four cwt., were sent to the United States. The Canadian consignment was despatched on the 9th so as to give everyone a fair start. Bishop Thirlwall was the first chairman of the Old Testament company; on his death his place was taken, first by the late Bishop of Llandaff, and then by the Bishop of Winchester (Dr. Harold Browne). Of the original number who first put their hands to the work on the 30th June, 1870, only fifteen now remain; ten have been removed by death. The company have held eighty-five sessions and sat for 792 days of six hours each. Professor Green, of Princeton, the most masterly of all the critics of Dr. Robertson Smith, was president of the American company. *The Christian Leader*.

IN MAGNA GRÆCIA.

On the other side of Leucaspide to the north is the curious and weirdly beautiful little town of Massafra, situated on a small hill cut in two by a deep rugged ravine, spanned by a fine bridge, the arches some 300 feet high. If I had been suddenly dropt blindfolded into Massafra, and then told to take the bandage off my eyes and say where I was, I should have answered, "Egypt." The people are pure Arabs in look and gesture, the shrill intonation of the voice is Arab, so are the splendid eyes and flashing teeth. Their passion for bright colours in their dresses, and for daubing red, yellow, blue and green paint on the outside of their miserable huts, is quite eastern. They talk an impossible *patois* which even the people round find it difficult to understand. The tradition runs that the Saracens, gradually driven back from Taranto, settled there, withstanding all attempts to dislodge them; thence the name *Massa Afr* (the rock of the Africans), now *Massafra*. But no one really knows much about the place.

The hill on which the little city stands is all vergrown with prickly pears, and one or two feathery palm trees wave slowly to the wind, perhaps planted by the swarthy Saracens, as the palm is said to live longer than any other tree.

The view of the bridge is most extraordinary, and very picturesque. The two steep sides of the ravine are alive with people, who still inhabit the old cave dwellings of the aboriginal races of this country. Overhanging the precipice, and partly cut out of the living rock, is a noble mediæval castle, its large round towers going sheer down to the bottom of the Gravina, where in winter there is sometimes a raging torrent, which occasionally floods the lower caves, and drives the poor inhabitants out for a time.

I went down a steep path opposite the castle for a little way, and looked into the rock habitations. Some had no doors of any sort, and contained a bedstead, a wooden box, and a chair; occasionally the people had built a sort of entrance porch, and in one a woman was sitting spinning cotton, which is extensively grown round the town. Two hens were perched on the back of the chair and a goat lay chewing the cud at her feet.

The modern and extremely dirty town is built on the summit of the two hills, and extends down a broad road towards the railway station. About a mile and a half behind the town, in the bottom of the Gravina, is the church of the Madonna della Scala, so called from the immense staircase which has been built to get down from the road to the bottom of the ravine. The modern church has been erected on the site of one of extremely ancient date, hewn out of the rock, and of which a part is still existing; a small chapel with a rather majestic Virgin and child painted on the wall, over an altar cut out of stone and an arched passage, of which one side only is left, with saints, rather above life size, painted in fresco and of wonderfully vivid colours. These, although Byzantine in character, do not appear older than the thirteenth century. In the modern church is a Madonna with the Infant Jesus, of which the usual fable is related: a light was seen hovering in the Gravina, a peasant dug and discovered the holy picture. It is so blackened by smoke that I could only just make out its Byzantine outline on a gold background. The whole of the ravine of Massafra is honeycombed with the ancient cave habitations of the prehistoric inhabitants; to whom succeeded the early Christians, who hid there, doubtless from persecution, and who cut the cross in nearly every cave I saw. After them the Saracens, who gradually adopted Christianity, and amalgamated more or less with the Greeks, took possession of the rock-hewn dwellings, and at Massafra their descendants still inhabit them.

Now that the railway has made communication easy, doubtless the history of this interesting and fascinating country will be more studied. The great want at present is decent inns. Travellers in Apulia, and still more in Calabria, must be prepared to rough it considerably, but the place and the people are delightful. Taranto is to become the great naval station of Southern Italy, and every one is looking forward with great interest to what may come to light when the docks are dug out on the side of "molle Tarentum."—*Janet Ross, in Macmillan's Magazine*.

A NEW CHURCH BUILDING HYMN.

The occasion on which we are met is an extraordinary one, and calls on me to say a few words. I have to congratulate you on the congregational effort you have made and which you have now brought to a successful conclusion. You may feel some pardonable pride when, looking round on this beautiful church, you remember it is the work of your hands, the fruit of your industry, and your religious bequest to the people who after you shall find in it a spiritual home—an inn where they can have shelter from the storm and refreshment by the way. Lord Tennyson tells how a certain city without either the sound of voice or hammer rose into towers; how all its gables, minarets, and domes sprang into existence "at the sound of music slowly breathed." The hammer and the pick have been heard here during these months that have gone. The material fabric is now complete; but the spiritual temple, in the building of which you will now labour, will rise into being only through the unheard operations of God's Spirit. I am sure your church will carry on here those

evangelical traditions which have made it so distinguished. If the blood of bulls and goats does not flow in this place, I hope not the less will the sacrifice of the heart for sin continue to be offered. The opening of this new church gives you an event to be thankfully remembered, an opportunity to be carefully improved. It may well fill you with the pleasing hope that your special religious service and ordinances will be continued to you. I trust that God will beautify your assemblies by His gracious presence; I trust He will make you joyful in this His house of prayer; I trust He will here give testimony to His word of Grace; I trust you will always find the place of His feet glorious; and finally, I trust there may from time to time be added to the Church of the number of such as shall be saved. It will fare well with you if your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, and men find you are not one thing in profession and another thing in practice, but that you adorn your profession by a blameless walk and conversation befitting the Gospel.

It is well for you on an occasion of this kind to rejoice. I offer you this hymn as a spiritual chanson. It is my own wish for you. May it reflect your feelings and prayers on this occasion. May it be an instrument whereby you may be able to make melody in your hearts unto God.

This church unto Thy service, Lord,
We freely dedicate;
Make her Thy house, most gracious God,
And keep her consecrate.
Here oft may prayer prevail with Thee,
And hallowed songs arise,
When congregations meet to pay,
Their Sabbath sacrifice.

May weak ones here find strength to bear,
And weary ones find rest;
Make thirsty ones to drink of Thee,
Each hungered one, a guest.
A simple Gospel full and free
Be ever preached in her;
And here the wand'ring one be found
A quiet worshipper.

Sweet be the air within these walls,
And sweet the prayer that's said;
Sweet, sweet the view of Jesus's face,
And sweet the lesson read.
And when in mem'ry of His cross,
Christ's chalice here is drained,
Oh! in a good and perfect way
Be every spirit trained.

Now bless our congregation, Lord,
With bounties from Thy hand,
And bless our Queen with length of days,
And bless our native land,
And bless our pastor; from Thy store
Give every treasure free;
Give work to all, and good to all,
And grace abundantly. Amen.

—*Rev. P. Anton in Christian Leader*.

BISMARCK'S RELIGIOUS BELIEF.

A belief in God, in a divine order of the world, and in a personal existence in a future state and, to a certain extent, in revelation, seems to form for him a sort of rude basis of religious belief, with which he has remained satisfied without raising on it the superstructure of any definite creed. In religion, as in politics, he confesses that he has arrived at successive stages of development. In the days when he was known as the *tolle junker* he was first a rationalist and apparently for some time, an unbeliever. Then for several years he went through severe physical, moral, and even pecuniary trials, and felt a desire to seclude himself from society, and even at one time had a design of emigrating and retiring to the Polish forests with his last few thousand thalers in his pocket and commencing life anew as a farmer and a sportsman. As he approached his thirtieth year a psychological change came upon him, which was probably due in part to the influence of the young lady who became his wife in 1847. This lady, Johanna von Puttkamer, was the daughter of a Nether-Pomeranian landowner, and both her father and mother, being people of a fervent Moravian spirit of piety, opposed themselves to the betrothal of their daughter with one so noted for his wild habits as the "Mad Squireen." Goethe has shown in the "Story of a Fair Soul" how he could be affected by the simple piety of a Quakeress; and Bismarck was, it is probable, more deeply influenced. After the accession, too, of Frederic William IV. there was a great increase of piety, or at least of pietism, in the higher circles of Prussian nobility. The spiritualism of Schleiermacher had displaced the rationalistic influence of Voltaire and Rousseau. Rationalism came in polite circles to be considered somewhat vulgar, and was associated with revolution; and even philosophy in the crabbed phraseology of Hegelianism not only was made an instrument for undermining all existing institutions, but appeared to be pre-eminently unæsthetic. A religious and unctuous phraseology was the fashionable protest against new Hegelianism and revolution. Bunsen, Stahl, and Gerlach were in vogue, and the doctrine of original sin and of the corruption of human nature was employed to exercise the spectre of anarchy.—*Edinburgh Review*.

ACCORDING to Dr. E. D. Neill, the historian of Virginia, in his newly published "Virginia Vetusta," the first Presbyterian church in America was erected in the Somers Islands, by Lewis Hughes, and the Puritan Liturgy of the Isle of Jersey was used in the congregation.

In Switzerland the authorities are putting a stop to the Mormon propaganda. At Basle recently a band of Mormon missionaries, accompanied by a crowd of perverses, remained over night. They were all arrested, the deluded people sent back to their homes, and the missionaries fined each 100 francs and also sent to prison for twenty-five days.

British and Foreign.

THE Brooklyn Bridge earned \$950,474.46 in its first two years.

THE *Eagle* says there are 280 churches in the city of Brooklyn.

BELLER BOYD, the Confederate spy, is teaching elocution in Little Rock, Ark.

THE Rev. Dr. Cramer Roberts, Bishop of Nassau, Bahamas, is returning to England to resign his see.

THE annual report of the United Kingdom Band of Hope Union gives a total of 11,708 societies, with 1,434,930 members.

MR. PETER GILES, a graduate of Aberdeen, has carried off the Lightfoot Scholarship for Ecclesiastical History at Cambridge.

THE Rev. Peter Carmichael, of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Airdrie, has been inducted co-pastor to Dr Edmond, London.

MR. ROBERT FAIRLY, who was associated with Hugh Miller as proprietor and manager of the *Witness*, died lately at the age of eighty-eight.

THE Revs. John Martin, Edinburgh, and P. Anton, parish minister, preached recently at the opening of the new Wesleyan Church at Kilsyth.

THE King of Saxony has taken for the summer season the magnificent villa Sybilport, in the Italian lake country, and owned by the Duke of Brunswick.

THE Irish College of Surgeons recognizes the London Medical School for Women, and has decided to admit its students to examination for its diplomas.

IT is reported that Miss Kate Stephens, Professor of Greek in the Kansas State University, has been compelled to resign. She says it is because she is a woman.

TWO AND A HALF million copies of "Hymns Ancient and Modern" were sold between the year of its publication and 1880; and the sales go on increasing each succeeding year.

MR. HISLOP, an Edinburgh stockbroker, has obtained a decree against Dr. A. Stuart Muir, of Leith, for nearly \$5,000 for losses on Stock Exchange transactions.

PRINCESS CHRISTIAN is almost constantly employed in charitable work among the East London poor, the majority of her beneficiaries having not the slightest knowledge that their kind friend is of rank.

A ROMISH priest in a small town in the interior of Sicily, who has gathered about him 350 persons to whom he teaches evangelical doctrines, has invited the Waldensian pastor of a neighbouring city to visit him.

THE Rev. Dr. Milligan, of Aberdeen, conducted the service at the Scotch National Church, Crown-court, Drury-lane, recently. He preached upon the naturalness of religion and its adaptability to man.

IT is a striking, and also an inspiring, thought that there are probably more evangelical preachers in India alone at this hour than there were in both Great Britain and America at the beginning of the last century.

THE Temperance movement is making great progress in the British mercantile marine and among fishermen. No fewer than 42,387 seamen, fishermen, and bargemen have been pledged during the last six years.

THE deputation from the English Presbyterian Church to the Irish General Assembly this year will consist of Revs. R. Taylor, Norwood, and Dr. Wright, Editorial Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

THE Presbytery of London has accepted the resignation of Rev. D. Alexander as minister of the Bermondsey congregation. Three years ago Mr. Alexander left the Congregational Union, and now he purposes returning thither.

SOME Birmingham sympathizers with the views of Lord Bramwell having sent him lordship a congratulatory address, received a reply in which he said: "I am in good health for seventy-seven; I drink very little. Is Birmingham right?"

THE Rev. Edward White, of Kentish Town, so well-known as the author of the leading exposition of the "Conditional Immortality" theory, has been unanimously elected Chairman of the Congregational Union of England for 1886.

THE foundation stone of a new church at Parsonstown has been laid by the Rev. Jackson Smyth, D.D., Armagh. The Earl of Rosse presided, and there was a large attendance of friends, some of them having travelled a long distance to be present.

THE *Spalding Free Press* says that some years ago a public-house was as much in demand as a well-appointed farm. Recently, after an auction, spiritless to a degree, a popular hotel at Lynn, let on a repairing lease at \$750 a year, was withdrawn at \$8,500.

REV. Dr. Henry A. Stern, for more than forty years a missionary of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, and who was one of the Abyssinian captives delivered after years of imprisonment by Lord Napier in 1868, has died in his sixty-fourth year.

THE King of Belgium, the President of the African International Association, has decided to open an African Seminary in connection with the University of Leyden, at which young men will be prepared for missionary work in the newly opened districts of the Dark Continent.

THE Rev. Robert Gordon, a coloured native minister from Jamaica, was presented recently by Rev. James Buchanan, Foreign Secretary, United Presbyterian Church, in name of friends, with a purse of sovereigns and several volumes in acknowledgment of his services during his visit to Scotland.

THE Rev. R. Primrose, of Cumbernauld, at present enjoying a holiday in the East, conducted divine service in the large building rented by the War Office for the use of the Presbyterian troops in Cairo. A more mixed audience few clergymen have ever addressed—military men of every grade; civilians of different country, colour, and creed, Greeks and Copts being well represented.