

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

THE WALDENSIAN VALLEYS.

LEAVES FROM A TOURIST'S NOTE BOOK.

THE VALLEY OF RORA.

The valley of Rora, although not one of the principal valleys, deserves notice, before quitting the Vaudois territory, for it possesses an interest of its own. This—"the Valley of Dews"—is the most southerly of all the parishes, and every part of it is full of stirring memories to the Vaudois. In shape it is like a vast cup, its sides clothed with meadows and fields of corn, with fruit and forest trees, and its rim formed of peaked and craggy mountains, some of which are clad in snow. It is separated from the valley of Luserne by the heights of L'Envers, over which lies the nearest road from the one valley to the other. By descending the Pellice some two miles, however, access is gained to the interior of the cup by an opening through which flows the torrent of Lusernette. We entered it by the shorter, but more fatiguing route, and left by the longer and less painful one. From Torre Pellice to the inner side of the rim of the cup, where the hamlet of Rora is placed, requires a stiff climb of about three hours, during which one is often tempted to turn and gaze upon the Casteluzzo opposite, and up the valley to the many mountain peaks which separate it from France and the other valleys. The valley beneath, too, is charming in a fine summer morning with the Pellice, like a silver thread, descending from ledge to ledge, and the towers of the temples of Villaro and Bobbio standing out of the trees amidst which they are nestling. The

HAMLET OF RORA

is composed of several farm houses, scattered about without any regard to order, and near the centre of them stands the Vaudois temple, which, from its too great proximity to a high rock, we found to be quite damp in the interior. The pastor—Signor G. D. Ugone—(Hugo, in French) had descended to Torre Pellice, as we ascended, so that we had not the pleasure of finding him at home. His wife and children were there, and after sitting a short time and hearing the Rora news, a boy went with us to show us the church and some other localities. The number of Roman Catholics here is very small, only two or three families, and yet they have a church and service here as in every other Vaudois parish. Rora was more than once depopulated during the seventeenth century, and here, as in other parts of the valleys, miracles of valour were performed, the hero of Rora being

JOSUE JANAVEL.

about whose birth and death Vaudois historians are silent. This "heroic mountaineer," as he is generally styled, is one of the most famous in all Vaudois story, owing to his feats of bravery on the battle-field, and his firm adherence to his faith in the most trying circumstances. After eight years of sublime struggles with bitter foes, he was compelled to retire into Switzerland, where he is seen praying for his people and working for their re-establishment in their homes. He then disappears forever from view. His role in Vaudois history strikingly resembles that of the judges amongst the people of Israel. These were raised up to deliver the Israelites from their enemies, and Janavel seems to have been raised up to deliver the Vaudois from their cruel persecutors by almost equally miraculous feats.

On the 24th April, 1655—the year in which a general massacre took place in most of the valleys—600 men were sent from Villaro to do similar butchery in Rora. But Janavel and eighteen trusty men were on the lookout for them, and the result was the retreat of the whole with loss; and next day the same scene was enacted at another part of the heights. Three days after, an entire regiment left Villaro and climbed to Rora to find the hamlet deserted, the inhabitants, except the men, having retired to the heights of Frioland—the mountain to the south of the valley. After burning most of the houses and carrying off the cattle, the soldiers attempted to make their way down into the valley through which flows the Lusernette, intending to return by the level road, to which reference was made at the beginning. Janavel and his men who were concealed amongst the rocks, attacked them in the narrow intricate paths which wind in a zigzag fashion between peaked rocks with vast precipices on one side, and the result was a panic which sent them into pro-

found ravines and even into the torrent, in which many lost their lives. Finding this route impossible, the soldiers tried to regain the heights they had left, hoping to return by the way they had come. But here again Janavel was before them, and by the time they had got over the height of Pian-pira, the Vaudois were ready to hurl down upon them huge stones which put them to flight once more. These and similar defeats so roused the fury of the Marquis of Pianezza that he is said to have "bit his nails" in rage, and to have sent a letter to Rora, in which he summoned the people to go to mass in twenty-four hours under pain of death, the burning of the rest of their dwellings and the cutting of their fruit trees. To this epistle the people replied that they preferred death a hundred thousand times better than to go to mass; that if their houses were burned and their fruit trees cut, their heavenly Father would still provide for them. To put his threats into execution the marquis actually sent ten thousand men against Rora—a poor little hamlet of twenty families! To Janavel he wrote that if he did not abjure his heresy he would burn alive his wife and daughters who were in his power, and would set such a price on his head that dead or alive he would be delivered up, and if once he fell into his hands, there would be no torments too great to be inflicted on him. To this the courageous warrior replied that there were no torments so cruel he would not prefer to abjuring his faith—that threats, instead of turning him from it, only fortified him in it. As regarded his wife and daughters, God alone was the master of their lives; and if their bodies perished, their souls would be saved. He then left, however, and removed his son whom he had entrusted to a relative at Villaro, carrying him through deep snow over the Alps into the Valley of Queyras in France, after resting for a time he returned, and joining his forces to those of Jahier—another hero whose fame is in all this land—he swept down upon Luserne, like an eagle, cutting a regiment of Irish and a regiment of Piedmontese into pieces, and then with 600 men who had collected, he encamped upon the heights of Roclamaneot. "This is our Mount Tabor," said he to his men. "O God," then cried he, "cover us with Thy powerful hand," which has been translated into

"Great God of Armies! King of Kings!
Oh! spread thine everlasting wings
Around our pilgrim bands;
Still o'er us may thy banner stream,
And in thy strength we shall redeem
Our much-loved Fatherland."

This prayer was heard, and three assaults were successfully repelled. But we cannot follow him farther except to say that he finally had to take refuge in Switzerland, where he was still alive in 1686 when large numbers of his countrymen had to follow in the depth of winter to escape a horrible massacre. Janavel, then about eighty years of age, went to meet them, and was so affected at the sight of their wretched condition as to faint in their arms.

Such then was a specimen of the

OLD VAUDOIS HEROES.

Courageous and devoted, firm and persevering in resistance, prompt and irresistible in attack, terrible in pursuit, yet humble and faithful Christians who expected victory only by the help of God, and who asked it on their knees before engaging in action. No wonder that a sentiment of profound respect and admiration for these old heroes still fills the hearts of their descendants, and makes them love to visit the spots consecrated by their footsteps, and to repeat their praises on every fitting occasion.

Et de nos jours encore, lorsque sur ces collines,
Pour creuser un sillon vient l'enfant des châlets,
Il trouve dans le sol de vieilles javelines,
Et sa bêche étincelle au contact des boulets.

A patric! O Vallons! sainte foi de nos pères!
Au prix de tant d'efforts conservés à nos cœurs,
Inspirez-nous encore pour conquérir des fiers!
Les Vaudois, avec Dieu, seront toujours vainqueurs.

Before leaving this valley, I must add that

VICTOR AMADEUS,

the scourge of the Vaudois, took refuge in Rora, when the French sent an army to attack him—which showed his real opinion as to the character of the people. He was not disappointed, for he was kindly received by a Vaudois, and kept concealed until all danger was past.

In descending into the cup we found the path as rough and difficult as it seems to have been 200 years ago, so that we were right glad to reach the

level of the Lusernette, where they were making a new road, chiefly for better access to the stone quarries on the side of the hill beyond.

THE SCENERY,

on both sides of the stream as we descended, was exceedingly fine. On the opposite side the hills were covered to their summit with magnificent trees of all kinds, while jagged rock towered high up on our left. We therefore enjoyed our walk of two hours to Luserne, a considerable town at the entrance of the valley, wholly Romanist. When passing the garden of the Marquis d'Angrogne, who resides here occasionally we noticed a Latin motto cut in the stone above the gate: "Lucerna pedum meorum verbum tuum, Domine," "Thy Word the light of my feet, O Lord"—a device little heeded by an ancestor of the Marquis, who in 1650 threw into his dungeons multitudes of innocent Vaudois for reading the Word of God. Resting here on the brow of the hill, overlooking the Pellice, we had a fine view of the heights of

ST. GIOVANNI

with the Vaudois temple and Roman Catholic church facing each other in the centre of the village of St. Jean. This village is on the sunny side of the valley in the midst of an exceedingly fertile part of the country, which is covered up to the summit of the hills with vines, mulberry and chesnut trees, rich meadows and comfortable dwelling-houses being scattered over the valley and the lower portions of the heights. The roads, too, are excellent and hedges of thorn and sweet scented shrubs give the country at the entrance of the Valleys something of the appearance of an English landscape. Everywhere is beauty and everywhere is light. The pastor of this, the richest of all the parishes, is Signor A. Gay. Many of the pastors and evangelists were brought up in this parish, as well as several of their wives. I visited here the humble ancestral home of Dr. Lautaret, of Pomeret, in which now resides three maiden sisters of his. On that occasion the only sitting room was filled with a large table covered deep with mulberry leaves on which were crawling and feeding quantities of silk worms in one of the stages preparatory to spinning their cocoons. They brought out chairs to the verandah, and a bottle of excellent home-made wine, and entertained us with an account of the rearing of these worms and the processes through which they pass. At the stage in which they then were, it was necessary for some one to sit up with them day and night, to keep the room in an equal temperature, or otherwise they might die, and a valuable source of income be lost. No apologies were attempted for the house being in such a condition and a pleasanter or more profitable visit I have seldom made. And this leads me to say that each Vaudois being the

"SON OF HIS OWN DEEDS,"

family pride is out of the question. The individual who has raised himself by his talents or industry above his former position or that of his relations, displays no vanity in consequence. He speaks of his brothers and sisters who may be in humbler circumstances without the least disguise, and talks of the "paternal home," be it the merest hovel, with all the affection of hereditary attachment. "There," said a pastor to me, pointing to a small stone building, "I was born and there my forefathers lived for generations; my heart beats at the sight of it."

THE PIEDMONTESE DIALECT

spoken by the peasants in the valleys is somewhat barbarous, being a mixture of Latin, French and Italian. The official language of the country is, of course, the Italian, but the people all understand French better than Italian, which happens in this way. Persecution, aided by a pestilence brought into the valleys by French soldiers in 1630, carried off most of the people and left but two pastors alive. To supply the parishes with pastors, men had to be brought from Switzerland and the Protestant parts of France, and these, knowing neither Piedmontese nor Italian, had to teach the people the best way they could in French. In time, therefore, the people came to understand the French quite well, though, of course, they continued to speak the Piedmontese amongst themselves; and now after the lapse of centuries, we found even in the remotest parts that they all perfectly understood us when speaking French, though occasionally we had great difficulty in understanding them. There are many other matters of interest, such as