

Pastor and People.

AN EVENING PRAYER.

My Master, help Thou me !
The holy presence of the night draws near,
Flies swift away the passion of the day ;
Amid the shadows stealing gray and drear,
I kneel and lift my restless soul to pray.

My Master, help Thou me !
Thou know'st this life of mine ; 'tis not to-night
A crushing load of bitter grief, nor mete
Of joy too full for my poor spirit's might
I bring, in prayer, to lay at Thy dear feet.

My Master, help Thou me !
The daily press of little cares, the cross
Of smallest plans to bear ; the grace of heart
That checks the fitful speech to gain, and loss
To freely count all things from Thee apart.
—*New York Observer.*

GOLDEN GRAIN BIBLE READING.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B.D., PH.D.

THE POSITION OF THE CHRISTIAN BEFORE GOD.

Key text : Ephes. ii. 13.

What is involved in this ?

I. As to the past : " In Christ," 2 Cor. v. 17 ; Gal. vi. 15.

" Quickened," Ephes. ii. 1.

" Sin forgiven," 1 John ii. 12 ; Ephes. i. 7.

II. As to the present :—

No condemnation, Rom. viii. 1, 33, 34.

Reconciled, Col. i. 21.

Adopted, Ephes. i. 5, 6.

In covenant relations, Heb. x. 16, 17.

Blessed with all spiritual blessing, Ephes. i. 3.

Fellowship, Heb. xii. 22, 24.

Sealed, Ephes. i. 13.

III. As to the future :—

Heirs of God, Rom. viii. 17 ; James ii. 5 ; Luke xv. 31.

Mansions, John xiv. 23.

With Christ, John xvii. 24.

Reigning, 2 Tim. ii. 12 ; Rev. v. 9, 10.

THE INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY UNION.

Dr. John L. Nevius, who lately preached in Toronto, has the following communication in the current quarter's issue of the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* :—

The annual meeting of the International Missionary Union was held in Clifton Springs, N. Y., from June 10 to the 16th. A year ago the Union met at Clifton Springs by invitation, for the first time. This year, in response to another invitation, it met there again. The meetings were held in a new building called "The Tabernacle," recently erected in a beautiful grove on the Sanitarium grounds. This structure is spacious, well ventilated, and has a seating capacity for 500 persons, easily increased by additional seats to more than 600. Its acoustic properties are admirable. It was formally opened on the evening of July 9, and put at the disposal of the Union whenever required, with the generous invitation from Dr. Foster to make Clifton Springs the permanent place of the meeting of the Union in the future, the members all being his guests for the week, which invitation was gratefully accepted.

The number of missionaries present was ninety-one. They were mainly from the various missionary societies of the United States, while a few came from Canada and Europe. The missionary fields were represented as follows : India, fifteen ; China, thirteen ; Japan, twelve ; Turkey, eight ; Africa, seven ; Burmah, seven ; Siam, five ; Korea, three ; South America, three ; Central America, two ; Northwestern America, two ; Australia, two ; Italy, two ; Mexico, two ; Syria, two ; Hawaiian Islands, two ; Malaysia, one ; secretaries, five ; candidates, two.

The week was found all too short for a consideration of the many subjects which claimed attention. The sessions were occupied with the study of the Scriptures and prayer, carefully-prepared papers or essays, information and personal experiences from almost every part of the world, and informal conferences. The meeting attracted many of the guests in the Sanitarium and residents of the adjacent villages and towns, and some from distant cities.

A considerable number of the missionaries present are soon to leave the United States again for their several fields of labour. There can be no doubt that the meetings of the Union are a great benefit not only to the missionaries, but to the Church at home as well.

The Union sent out resolutions and appeals with reference to the attitude of the United States Government toward China, the "Brussels Treaty," "The Efforts of the United States Government to Extend the Sale of Intoxicating Liquors in Mexico," and an "Appeal to the Churches."

The appeal to the Churches is as follows :—

We, members of the "International Missionary Union," on behalf of the several missionary fields from which we have come, and in the name of our brethren now labouring in those fields, and of our former associates who have fallen at their posts ; and, above all, in the name of our blessed Lord, who has commissioned the Church to disciple all nations, make this appeal to the Churches which we represent.

We have fallen upon a time of great privileges and responsibilities. The prayer of the Church that God would open the world to Christian effort implied a pledge and promise on the part of the Church to perform her duty as the way might be opened.

At the present time world-wide opportunities and the possession by the Church of men and means adequate to world-wide efforts, give to our Lord's command to evangelize the nations, an emphasis and urgency hitherto unparalleled. Ordinary consistency and sincerity, as well as loyalty to Christ, gratitude for our distinguishing mercies, compassion for the many millions of God's lost children, a sense of personal indebtedness to them, and the fear of incurring God's displeasure and the withdrawal of His Spirit from our home Churches by neglect or delay in the discharge of present duty, conspire to awake us to immediate action, and to such action as shall in some good degree be commensurate with our obligations.

We therefore request and beseech all pastors and teachers to seek, by the prayerful study of God's Word and a familiar acquaintance with the condition and needs of heathen nations, to know more of God's will and our duty with reference to the world's evangelization, and to teach those under their influence the relations to the whole world which are necessarily implied in Christian discipleship, and the privileges and duties growing out of those relations.

We would call upon all God's people, especially those who are rich in this world's goods, to give freely of their substance for the enlargement and generous support of every department of missionary work.

We recognize with devout gratitude to God the work for Foreign Missions which has been accomplished by Woman's Missionary Societies, The Student Volunteer Movement, Young Men's Christian Associations and Christian Endeavour Societies and similar organizations, and we would urge all Christians to unite with us in the prayer that these organizations may be still more abundantly blessed, and used of God for the advancement of His cause in the future.

Finally, with a full conviction and realization of the utter uselessness of all human efforts and pecuniary gifts without God's presence and aid, we would call upon all God's people to unite in earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit may be poured out on all nations ; that the Lord of the harvest may choose and send forth from Christian lands, and from converts in unevangelized lands, many labourers into His harvest ; and that His kingdom may come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

THE VAUDOIS OF THE FRENCH ALPS.

You know that the history of the Vaudois, that Israel of the Alps, dates back to a remote period, long before the Reformation. They were Protestants before Protestantism. Their name comes probably from the word *Valdensis*, signifying inhabitants of the valley. At the present day there are two principal branches of this large family : the Italian Vaudois inhabiting Piedmont, forming in themselves a flourishing Church and the Vaudois of the French Alps, who are united to the Reformed Church of France. Let me tell you something about these latter.

The French Waldensian Churches are hidden away amongst the elevated and deep valleys of the Alps of Dauphiny. At these altitudes the winters are long and severe, and nature is almost sterile. For eight months in the year the ground is covered with snow, and the thermometer goes down to twenty degrees centigrade below zero. The inhabitants have thus only four months to cultivate their fields. Rye and a few potatoes are their principal crops. They have also a few flocks of sheep and goats. At the commencement of the winter they bake their bread for the whole season. When the snow covers the surface of the ground so as to barricade the entrance to the houses the Vaudois shut themselves carefully in their stables ; the animals on one side, the family on the other. Whilst the mother spins the wool and hemp for their rustic clothing, the father becomes a shoemaker, and makes shoes for his household.

When sickness comes upon them the anguish is great. Often it is impossible, on account of the severe weather, to fetch a doctor, and in every case the visit is put off as long as possible, as they know it is costly. How many of these poor people must have perished for want of timely medical aid ! After the miseries of the winter come the hardships and dangers of the thaw and the avalanche. From the mountain heights are detached enormous blocks of snow, several cubic metres in size, overturning houses in their fall, and often burying under them flocks of sheep and their shepherd. Such is a rapid sketch of the country of the Vaudois, and the customs of this interesting but scattered and rather numerous people.

But the country, so poor in a worldly point of view, has been blessed by God with a shower of spiritual blessings. As early as the first century of our era, Christianity penetrated into these inaccessible regions. Some historians say it was St. Paul himself who carried the Gospel to them in going from Rome into Spain.

Thanks to their isolation and thanks also to their tenacity, which is the prevailing characteristic of these mountaineers, the inhabitants of these countries were enabled to resist the encroachments of the Romish Church, and have remained faithful to the Bible. From the year 1000 these Churches of Upper Dauphiny (five centuries before the Reformation) formed themselves into an independent Church

and broke definitely with Rome, for which the Catholics have never pardoned them. From the twelfth to the end of the eighteenth century the history of the Vaudois or Waldenses has been a long martyrology. Councils fulminated against them decrees of death, and bishops aided inquisitors in carrying out these decrees with pitiless severity. They did not content themselves with immolating a victim here and there, they preached crusades against them and proceeded to wholesale extermination. Two of these are mournfully celebrated. The first took place in 1488, under King Charles VIII., the second in 1545, under Francis I. Let me give you a short account of the first.

In 1488 Hugues de la Pallu, a lieutenant of the king, fell suddenly upon the inhabitants of the valley of Freissinières before they had time to take to flight, and massacred every one to the very last. From there he went to the valley of Vallonise. Taken by surprise in the midst of their work, the poor peasants fled without provisions or arms and took refuge in a large grotto. Hugues de la Pallu caused a quantity of pine wood and green branches to be heaped up at the mouth of the cave and then set fire to it.

The greater part died of suffocation from the thick, black smoke, the others seeing themselves hopelessly lost, threw themselves down the precipices and were dashed to pieces or frightfully mutilated. Three thousand persons, amongst whom were four hundred children, perished in this hideous butchery, and their corpses became the prey of the eagle and the vulture. Their property was sold for the benefit of the inquisitors and the clergy.

Since those days these valleys have been deserted by the Vaudois. There are, however, a few still left in the other valleys, who have passed bravely through the two great crises called the St. Bartholomew (1572) and the revocation of the edict of Nantes (1685). Their churches might be pulled down or turned into Catholic places of worship ; they remain true to their faith.

The arguments of the Dominican and Jesuit missionaries sent to try and convert them did not avail to shake their constancy any more than did persecution.

At Dormilloux, the Abbe Toffret after long years of incessant effort, was unsuccessful in turning a single Vaudois from the faith of his fathers. One day, exasperated at his want of success, he addressed the following discourse to the inhabitants of this valley : "Obstinate people of Dormilloux, listen to me ! When I am at the gates of hell, my crucifix in my hand, I shall say to you, Come, come, damned people of Dormilloux, there is room for you !" A little later at the Revolution the entire population came to him in a body and addressed him as follows : "Sir Abbe, you have been many years amongst us, you have not obtained any result, you will not obtain any in the future. Abandon a post where there is nothing for you to do ; we will accompany you to the foot of the mountain and there we will shake hands and part." This was what in fact he decided to do some time after, and at the present moment the chapel he built is transformed into a Protestant temple. The modern period commenced before the ministry of Felix Neff, that intrepid servant of God who well deserves the name of the "Apostle of the Upper Alps," and who evangelized these countries from 1823 to 1827.

After four years of incessant journeyings across the mountains in most inclement weather he had ruined his health, but he had obtained a magnificent revival which extended even to the Catholics. Obligated to quit his beloved parishioners to be nursed at Geneva, he ceased not to keep up a correspondence with them. The last letter they received from him was written by his mother ; with his dying hand he traced himself these two lines, his last farewell to his beloved flock : "Once more adieu my friends of Dormilloux and of all Freissinières. With my own hand for the last time adieu till we meet in heaven."

If the eminent pastor whose name I have recalled succeeded in awakening souls, there was one thing he could not do, he could not change the barrenness of the soil nor the severity of the climate. The Vaudois, thrust back by their persecutors into the most inaccessible spots, only vegetate miserably now on their ungrateful soil.

The work of evangelization needs to be supplemented by one of philanthropy. This was understood after the death of Felix Neff, and an Englishman, Mr. Freemantle, and after him a French committee, which was formed at Lyons in 1886, have made great efforts to ameliorate the material condition of these poor people. Nothing has been spared in order to retain this handful of Protestants on their historical soil rendered illustrious by so many heroic souvenirs, but it has at length been discovered to be impossible. Therefore the Lyons committee has decided on transplanting the Vaudois family to Algeria. There a concession of ground has been obtained for them, and some advance of funds made them. When the first colonists are in a position to return the money lent, others will be brought out to whom the same advantages will be offered. In 1881 nine families from Freissinières arrived at the village of Trois Marabouts. They are now thoroughly acclimatized and are prospering. Six months ago a second detachment composed of two hundred souls, under the guidance and conduct of Messrs. Revillaud and Neil, arrived at the village of Guirard. A few more years and the sufferings and privations of these, our poor co-religionists, will be a thing of the past. May these brave mountaineers remember "the rock from which they are hewn," and may they remain worthy of their heroic past.—*Rev. A. Decoppet, in New York Observer.*

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