

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

EVANGELIZATION IN ITALY.

In previous letters I described the work of the Waldensian Church, both in the valleys of Piedmont, and throughout the Italian Peninsula from the Alps to Etna. It was stated that when liberty to evangelize was granted by King Carlo Alberto (17th February, 1848) there were only 18 ordained ministers, and that now there are 72; the communicants in the valleys numbering 12,156, and in other parts of Italy 3,225. I also gave some account of the work of the Free Christian Church in Italy, which was organized as an ecclesiastical body in 1865, and which drew up a confession of faith in 1870, when it assumed its present name. It was shown that the ordained ministers and evangelists, adhering to this branch of the Church, numbered 29, its colporteurs and teachers 25, its communicants 1,750, and its catechumens, 284. The present letter will give a brief account of the other Churches which are taking part in the work of evangelization throughout the country.

FREE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (THE BRETHREN).

Before 1848 the Gospel had penetrated into Tuscany, and several Italians, including Count Guicciardini, had been brought to a knowledge of the truth. These, having come into contact with some English Christians, commenced in Florence a work entirely independent of any ecclesiastical organization, which gradually penetrated to all the provinces of Italy. This Church numbers about fifty groups of Brethren; but it has been found impossible to procure accurate information regarding the number of adherents or members. They have places of worship in twenty-two cities, and occupy stations in thirty-four other places, where meetings are held generally in private houses.

THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH.

This Church commenced its work of evangelization in Italy in Nov., 1861. Its churches and stations are divided into two districts. The northern district is under the superintendence of the Rev. H. J. Piggott, of Rome, and the southern under that of the Rev. T. W. S. Jones, of Naples. In the northern district the number of ordained ministers is 14, probationers 3, theological students 2, evangelists 3, teachers 14, colporteurs 1, making a total of 37. There are communicants 869, catechumens 58, Sunday school scholars 414, week day scholars 530, and evening school scholars 329. There are also some special works, supported in whole or in part by the Wesleyan Methodists. They have three mothers' meetings in Rome, with 160 members. There is also a mission amongst soldiers of an undenominational character, but chiefly supported by them. The meetings are conducted by Signor Cappellini in the hall, 28 Via delle Cappelle, Rome.

In the southern district there are 24 ministers, evangelists, and preachers, 582 communicants, 163 catechumens, 220 children attending day schools, and 239 attending Sunday schools.

EPISCOPAL METHODIST CHURCH.

This denomination, which was organized according to the episcopal system, in 1784, and which is most largely represented in the United States of America, commenced its work of evangelization in Italy in January, 1873. On the 19th of March, 1881, the Italian Mission was constituted into a regular annual Conference, and thus acquired a normal position, and an independent ecclesiastical organization, of which the Rev. Dr. Leroy M. Vernon, Rome, is President. There are now 16 ordained ministers, 7 probationers, 10 Bible women, 16 churches, 7 stations, 707 communicants, 343 catechumens, and 381 Sunday school scholars.

BAPTIST MISSION.

The Baptists in the United States support two great missionary societies—the American Missionary Union, and the Southern Baptist Convention. It is the latter society which commenced the Italian Mission in 1870, the missionaries being the Rev. Dr. Taylor and Rev. J. H. Eager. They have now 10 principal stations and 12 secondary stations, with 12 ministers. The members amount to 250, with an average number of hearers of 1,000; 6 Sunday schools, 1 day school, 5 circulating libraries, 3 evening classes, 2 societies for work and mothers' meetings in Rome and 1 colporteur.

THE CHRISTIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

This Church holds as its distinguishing doctrine the baptism of believers by immersion, but it admits to the communion those who have not been thus baptized (open Baptism Communion). It commenced its mission in 1863, and in Rome in 1870, its missionaries being the Rev. James Wall, Rome, Rev. W. Landels, Naples, and Rev. Robert Walker, Turin. It has churches and stations in nine Italian cities, with 343 members, and hearers varying from 580 to 765. There are 342 Sunday school scholars, and 185 scholars attending evening schools. It also maintains a mission amongst the beggars in Rome.

There is also what is called the Open Communion Baptist Church, which is similar in doctrine to the Christian Apostolic Church, but its work is under the direction of the General Baptist Missionary Society. Connected with this work is one missionary and one minister, both in Rome; the number of members being 20, and average number of hearers 70. Twenty scholars attend the Sunday school; there is also a day school and classes in the evening for adults for the study of French and English.

INDEPENDENT WORKS OF EVANGELIZATION.

There are several independent works of evangelization in Italy, of some of which, such as that at Spesia, I have already given an account. I might also refer to the Harbour Missions at Genoa and Naples, with both of which I am familiar. They are doing a great work, under the superintendence of Presbyterian ministers of the Free Church of Scotland; but, as I am shortly to visit them, I shall leave the details for a letter at some future time.

CONCLUSION.

From all this we see that the Gospel is spreading in Italy something like the leaven in the three measures of meal, very slowly, very secretly, and yet surely. The gains so far are counted only by units. I have seen it somewhere stated that, looked at from a religious point of view, there are three factors at work in Italy—popery, infidelity and evangelical faith. The first is visibly decaying and disintegrating; the second will be transient as it is a reaction from the first; the third which meets all the true wants of man's soul, will yet be welcomed by the heart of Italy. No doubt, the practical, thinking middle class have now very different ideas about Romanism from what they once had; and that hundreds of priests and other dignitaries of the Church of Rome are very uncomfortable in the positions they occupy, and only hold on to their connection, because wanting in that moral courage needed to renounce all for Christ and conscience. Now and again one of them does succeed in breaking the bonds that attach him to the Church, but the struggle is often long and severe. This was shown in the case of Count Enrico de Campello, whose secession a year or two ago, caused such a sensation. In his letter to Cardinal Borromeo, announcing his decision, he said "After two lustres of mature reflection, internal strife and deluded hopes, I may well swear to-day that for no other end but for the peace of my conscience I have come to this decision. May the Lord grant that my example be followed by many, who, like me, deceived when young, then terrorized by the vilest of systems, drag at present the chains of their own slavery, for the breaking of which do not always suffice the lights of science or the continuous disappointments of a long life, or the anguish of all kinds of oppression, etc." Many more, however, although convinced of their error, adhere to their dress and their income, having no other means of gaining a livelihood. Such men do not possess the courage so remarkably displayed last year by Giovanni Besso the farmer at Lessolo, in the story of "God or my mother," told in the report of the Waldensian committee of evangelization, and quoted in my last letter.

When the great politicians and statesmen of Florence were assembled in the grand hall of judgment three centuries ago, and were disputing as to who should be their king, it is said that the great reformer Savonarolo rushed into the midst of them and, holding up an image of the Saviour, exclaimed, "Jesus Christ is your king—Jesus Christ is your king." This is what "Italy needs for her stability, her prosperity, her freedom, her true greatness. And it is coming. Then will the glories of pagan Rome with her emperors and her armies, and of mediæval Italy with her painters and sculptors and poets, pale before the higher and diviner glory of an Italy that bows before the Sceptre of the King of kings." T. H.

Dresden, Saxony, 20 March, 1883.

MARITIME MUTTERINGS.

MR. EDITOR,—The prospects of Presbyterianism in these Provinces by the sea are very much brightened, and the cause strengthened by the filling of the numerous important vacancies in the cities of Halifax, N.S., and St. John, N.B. The prominent churches in the latter city—St. Andrew's St. John's, and St. David's—were vacant at the same time, whilst Calvin Church may be said to have been vacant, as the pastor is at present in Ireland on some business connected with the State. St. David's congregation has settled among them the Rev. Geo. Bruce, formerly of St. Catharines, who brings to his new sphere abilities in scholarship and preaching power of a high order. The Rev. Mr. Fotheringham, who has been installed in St. John's Church as successor to Dr. Bennett, gives promise of occupying successfully a very important field of labour, and whose past success justifies the selection made by the congregation. St. Andrew's congregation has lately extended a hearty call to Rev. Dr. Smith, the popular minister of St. Andrew's Church, Kingston, and the prospect of an early settlement has encouraged the people very much. There is little doubt that if Dr. Smith's health is spared he will soon bring this important congregation up to what it was in its palmiest days. An impressive preacher, gifted with a genial and pleasing manner, and possessed of good administrative abilities, Dr. Smith will doubtless prove himself a successful pastor in the commercial capital of New Brunswick. He will leave Ontario amid the regrets of numerous brethren to whom he was endeared by many acts of kindness, and by the college authorities in Kingston with whom he so cordially co-operated for the benefit of Queen's University. It may not be generally known in St. John that Dr. Smith received the degree of D.D., from two universities on the same day, and among the many degrees that are floating around few have been more worthily bestowed, or have been borne with more becoming modesty.

HALIFAX.

The third vacancy has been very satisfactorily filled in this city by the ordination of the Rev. L. Jordan, B.D., in St. Andrew's Church, rendered vacant by the translation of the Rev. Mr. Duncan to a charge in Scotland. Mr. Jordan is a native of Halifax, who, after a course of study at Dalhousie College, graduated in Scotland, and after returning to his native city was appointed to his present charge. In the case of Mr. Jordan the old proverb that a "prophet is not without honour, save in his own country" is not borne out, as he is to the manor born, and is said to be the only minister in Halifax of any denomination who was born inside the corporation limits. Mr. Jordan is an earnest and impressive preacher, and an important accession to the existing pulpit power of the city.

HALIFAX PRESBYTERY,

composed of about thirty ministers, met lately in Chalmers Church, and among other items of important business transacted, the Presbytery agreed to hold an evening meeting for the purpose of considering the best means of carrying on Sabbath school work. Rev. Mr. Roseborough presided and invited addresses and discussions on topics of interest to those engaged in this most important work.

On the whole, the addresses were good, but as is usual on such occasions where meetings are thrown open, there were opinions put forward which I think in sober moments would not be endorsed by the Presbytery, or by very few of its members. One speaker, for instance, advocated doing away with the Shorter Catechism in the school. Now, if young people are to be instructed in the distinctive doctrines and principles of our Church, where are they so fully and plainly set forth as in this excellent compend of doctrinal truth? If our young people are not to be so instructed, then they may as well go to the nearest school, whether it be Episcopal, Baptist, or Methodist.

SPECIAL SERVICES

are being held jointly in the Presbyterian churches. They were commenced in Fort Massey Church under the presidency of Rev. Dr. Burns and continued all the week, the Rev. Robert Laing and Rev. L. Jordan presiding in turn. The second week the meetings were held in St. Andrew's Church, and the third week in St. Matthew's.

In the north end of the city meetings were held in Poplar Grove Church the first week, and in St.