

MISSION FIELD.

A Glimpse of the McAll Mission Boat.

The meeting for prayer and conference of the workers of the mission, held in Paris every Friday at the Salle Philadelphia in the Rue Royale, is most interesting, as it brings one face to face, and in immediate touch with the laborers in the various halls. A very interesting feature of the McAll work, one that cannot be accentuated too strongly nor repeated too often in our appeals for financial help, is the large number of voluntary workers who entirely at their own expense, or in some cases, with but slight assistance, devote their whole time to its interests.

Some have been laboring in this way for fifteen or eighteen years, and they are not in circumstances of affluence by any means. One cannot look very closely into the work and not be impressed with the fact that there is a great deal of love put into it.

The meeting of the 12th of October was so full of fervor, earnestness, and enthusiasm, that even with only a partial understanding it was so infectious that it was "good to be there." It was entirely in French. Dr. McAll had a very thoughtful way of giving, at the close of the service, a resume in English so that anyone present not thoroughly familiar with French would lose nothing. This we sadly missed. It is, however, only one of the many reminders of that gentle, St. John like presence, and "the sound of a voice that is still." The whole burden of the meeting was the "Mission Boat and its work," that which was uppermost in our minds, for our object in attending was to meet Mr. Greig and arrange for a brief visit to it. We wish all contributors to the work could have seen that meeting, have looked upon the happy faces, heard the fervent tones of the prayers and addresses, and listened to the hearty responses. The "*exprit du corps*" was admirable. M. de Rugemont, who has done such remarkable service among the soldiers, and who has been following up the work of the boat, visiting the little villages and hamlets, spoke with glowing enthusiasm and solemn unction, giving incidents of most touching and thrilling interest. He spoke of an old man in one little village who had been a Christian since he was ten years old, who told him of the days before religious liberty came (after 1870) when they were not allowed to meet together, and of their going into the woods for a little service, and of the gendarmes hunting them out and dispersing them, and how happy he was to attend the service in connection with the boat and hear some one talk of Christ and heavenly things.

After the close of the meeting, finding that Miss Johnstone, the English helper, who for fourteen years has given her services gratuitously to the work, and who writes so vividly and delightfully for the English Quarterly Record, was about to make a visitation to the "*Bon Messager*" now lying at Compiègne, we speedily arranged to accompany her. Upon the day of our journey, under the blue sky and brightest sunshine, the fifty or more miles of the blessed country with verdant fields and forests touched with the yellow and gold of autumn, were good to look upon. Two hours upon the train, with glimpses of the forest of Chantilly, in every shade of burnished copper and glittering gold; of villages and towns, with smoky cream walls and grey roofs; of stately chateaus and of miniature rivers, winding and curving, making with wooded banks and islets a picture at every turn, and we were at Compiègne.

As we drove through the quaint streets to the hotel, we crossed the Pont Neuf with its triple grey arches. From it we looked along the pretty, picturesque Oise to the left, but bewitching as it was in its simple rural beauty, we were disappointed, for there was no indication of the boat! Looking, however, to the right, we could not but exclaim at the singular beauty of the little river, with, in the distance, an islet with three or four trees! It was an etching one would gladly have forever framed. Nearer, close to the shore, lay three great, red canal boats, abreast, and nearer still was the drollest craft that ever sailed upon sunny seas! One glance was sufficient. We knew it as we would the face of a friend. It was not what we had pictured, but we broke out in a glad, "The boat, the boat!"

It is a happy union of Church and State, a joining together (let us hope never by man to be put asunder) of canal boat and chapel, and as it goes from port to port, by the blessing of God, it is indeed a messenger of glad, good tidings to many a soul.

It is a funny looking thing. It does not "pretty much," neither will it ever be excelled for its beauty! A long, heavy hulk lying

low in the water, upon it a low, long chapel, with upon either side four quite ecclesiastical looking windows of inexpensive colored glass, and at either end a porch, with boxes of gay flowers the French so love to place everywhere, and various vines clambering picturesquely to the roof. The homely little craft grew very attractive, however, as the hours wore on. But for its preservation it sadly needs a coat of paint. Who wants to give it?

We found the interior quite churchly, with its open timbered roof and side brackets, and its rows of settees, melodeon, and reading desk. It is interesting to note how comprehensive its divisions and provisions are. Upon either side of the entrance, at the stern, forming a vestibule, is a kitchen and cabin for the pilot; at the opposite end, a little "salon" and bedroom for the missionary in charge. At the kitchen end, in the day time, the seats are moved back, making a vacant space upon either side. In one stood a small dinner table, in the other some chairs and a work-basket. The evangelist in charge humorously remarked, "That is our *salon* and this is our *salle-a-manger*!" Oh, how little satisfies and provides for these devoted and earnest workers, and how small are our gifts compared with their consecrated service!

To our regret, Captain and Mrs. Tim, who were associated with our every thought of the boat had returned to the southern village where their winters work lies. But the boat service is now in most able hands, an evangelist who was once a Romish priest, assisted by Miss M—, an Irish lady, being a resident of France, who has been staying at Compiègne for two months at her own expense. She is herself a trophy of the McAll Mission, with a story worth noticing here. Originally a Roman Catholic, then a nothingarian, and finally a freethinker, she was bitterly opposed to the Mission and lost no opportunity of throwing ridicule and condemnation upon it. One evening passing the Salle Philadelphia, she noticed the illuminated sign, "Conferences" and thinking it was a place for the discussions she loved so well, she went in. It was at the time of Dr. McAll's serious illness. Some reference was made to him, and it dawned upon her she was in a McAll meeting! Angry and furious, she arose to leave, hesitated, and remained to the close, became interested, and finally converted. And now, with old things passed away and a new song in her mouth, she is living and working for the faith she once labored to destroy. In view of this solitary case, who can limit the influence or result of the simple McAll Mission services?

As no service is held except in the evening, and some hours intervened, we strolled through the town and visited, the Royal Palace of Louis XV, the scene of the gay courts of successive monarchs, so full of reminiscences of the two ill-fated Empresses, Marie Loe and Eugene. We could not but feel the contrast between these regal apartments, with their story of folly extravagance and selfishness, draining in fact, the very life-blood of the country and people, and the humble little craft lying upon the river below, bringing the blessed tidings of the life laid down, that all that believe might live! Over the life represented by the stately palace and the lovely gardens has been written, "Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin," but above the little boat hovers like an aureole, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away." Oh, is it not a privilege to help this little leaven which in God's good time may leaven the whole lump? Let us no more think or call it toil or self-denial, but privilege to place our modest gifts and our little strength beside His, who is so mighty to save!

A few minutes after seven we were at the river bank, and found gathered a group of some forty or fifty persons waiting for the opening of the gangway gate. Miss Johnstone had brought some illustrated French papers for distribution. The avidity with which they were received by men, women, and children, made us regret that it had not occurred to us to have sufficient to feed the whole multitude.

Following the crowd we passed down the gangway and entered the vestibule and the cheerily lighted chapel. Could we help thinking as we felt our desire was at last fulfilled, of the Psalmist, "My feet shall stand within thy gates, O, Jerusalem?" We were given seats at the pulpit end, where we could see everything.

Soon every seat was occupied, and before us were from 125 to 150 souls. Some in grimy working dress, showing "the horny hand of toil;" some very plain, but cleanly in appearance; a dozen soldiers in uniform, and several so well dressed as to be evidently of a better class. No more attentive audience could be desired. The faces were neither stolid nor hard. There was the look of children, a pleased, wondering gaze, as if hearing something new, without questioning or doubt, and so good they did not wish to lose any.