

and probably an umbrella too. What a bright sun! Smoked glasses are a luxury. No green grass to relieve the eye though yonder is a field full of delicate green. Ah yes, opium flourishes in Central India. All the finest land, the greater part of the water supply and labour of its people and the care and attention of high and low alike are given to the cultivation of this terrible curse. Dearly has the victory over the Chinese been bought and the price is not by any means all paid. It is true that the native princes in order to raise this highly priced drug were led to dig wells, that otherwise would not have been thought of; but even these have been and shall continue to be dearly paid for. Do you wonder that people who have so little to live for or to stimulate ambition, so few enjoyments, so little to relieve their pains, when constantly working amongst it should gradually develop a taste for it. Yonder is a field of it, all cut up into little beds of six or eight feet square, carefully weeded and watered. See the women of the village are all out working but where are their babes? At home sleeping under the influence of opium. In the morning after its meal a piece of opium is put into the child's mouth and in unconsciousness it quietly awaits the return of the mother from the fields. At noon and again if need be at night the dose is repeated. Do you wonder at the large mortality in Central India? Hardly a child there does not get opium as regularly as its meals till it is about three years old. But it is not confined to children. Have they colds, or fevers or aches of any kind, then opium is their solace. Often it is more easily obtainable than food and so used to drown the cravings of an appetite which cannot be satisfied. You would find it hard to answer the indignant charges of the thinking ones amongst them who point to the terrible ravages of this evil seen everywhere and perchance even felt and who laying the blame at England's door ask if this is what Christianity prompts, or is it so powerless there that it cannot after all these centuries of growth check such cruel selfishness.

We have not yet I fear reaped the full harvest of iniquity. In China they have begun cultivating it themselves and so do not require the Indian article in the same quantities as before. Large stocks are unsalable in India. The stock holders must get money and so the article is lowered in price, encouragement given to its use and the evil still further developed. When will nations learn as well as individuals that as we sow so we must reap. But though we have not reached the village yet we must draw to a close for this time, promising a longer letter next week.

THE GLORIOUS RETURN—1689.

Mr. David K. Guthrie contributes the following interesting and timely historical sketch to the periodical, *A Voice from Italy*:

Before the next issue of *The Voice* can take place, the Bicentenary celebration will have come and gone; and our readers may reasonably expect some allusion in this number to an event whose two-hundredth anniversary in August is looked forward to with peculiar interest.

The history of the Waldenses for centuries before 1689 contains many a stirring page; but no episode in all their wondrous past is more worthy of remembrance than that which is known as the "Glorious Return" in 1689. A Return implies a previous Absence. Some of our readers may not know that the territory which had been from time immemorial the mountain home of the Vaudois for more than three years knew them not. The churches were closed, strangers put in possession of the houses and lands of the rightful owners, and they themselves scattered in other countries. How was this? The Waldenses did not leave their Valleys as emigrants. They were exiled against their will.

In 1686, one of the fiercest of the many blasts of persecution which have swept through their Valleys had burst. It ended in the wholesale incarceration of a people whose only crime was that they refused at the bidding of their prince to bow the knee to Rome. Men, women, and children were crowded into the loathsome prisons of Piedmont. "When they entered these dungeons," Henri Arnaud tells us, "they counted 14,000 healthy mountaineers, but when, at the intercession of the Swiss deputies, their prisons were opened, only 3,000 living skeletons crawled forth." Nor was this all. No sooner had this poor remnant obtained their liberty, than they were confronted by the alternative of abjuring their faith or quitting their country forever, within fifteen days, on pain of death. This was in December 1686, and amid the snows of winter they were driven across the Alps to Switzerland. No wonder many perished by the way; and had it not been for the kindness and care with which these poor people were welcomed in Switzerland, Germany and Holland, the Waldenses would have perished from off the face of the earth. It needed great faith in these depressing circumstances to trust the word of the Lord, "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

Three and a-half years they lived in Exile, but with an irrepressible longing pined for their native Valleys and yearned for a return. Time after time they made efforts which failed; but at length, one evening in August 1689, 800 or 900 determined men assembled by one common impulse on the northern shore of the Lake of Geneva. The decisive moment had come. That night (August 16) is one much to be remembered in the history of the Waldenses. Their rendezvous was a dense wood by the Lake, near Nyon, where boats were in readiness. Having committed themselves to God's protection in earnest prayer, they embarked in silence, and ere

morning broke, had all landed in safety on the shore of Savoy. Then began their perilous journey of twelve never-to-be-forgotten days. The plan of march had been carefully arranged beforehand, and every possible precaution taken; but its success was possible only to men of invincible determination and faith in God.

To an onlooker, their enterprise might well have seemed rash and foolhardy. How were those men, imperfectly provided with arms and provisions, to make their way across one intervening chain of precipitous heights after another? How were they to force a passage through a territory, 120 miles broad as the crow flies, guarded by the skilled troops of France and Savoy, whom it seemed as hopeless to elude as to resist? That such an enterprise, in such circumstances, was successfully accomplished, is indeed a marvel. One feels, in reading the thrilling narrative, that He who led His people by a pillar of cloud and fire through the wilderness was the guide and protector of His "Israel of the Alps" in later days. As respects human instrumentality, their success was largely due to one remarkable man, their leader, Henri Arnaud—whose name is imperishably associated with the "Glorious Return." Arnaud had in his youth served as a captain in the army of the Prince of Orange (afterwards William III. of England); in later years, he became an honoured pastor of the Waldensian Church. He it was who each morning of the journey led the devotions of his troops and directed their perilous march.

The eight hundred men, divided into nineteen companies, each under a leader, selected the least frequented paths of the mountains to avoid their foes. But this was not always possible; once and again it seemed as if further progress were hopeless. At Salanches, where a bridge crossed the Arve, their passage was fiercely disputed by 600 armed men. Over the Col de Bonhomme, they had to march amid drenching rain, sinking to the knees in soft snow at every step. On August 22nd, after crossing the Mont Cenis amid extreme hardship, they descended into the valley of the Dora. Here, obstacles more formidable than those of nature awaited them. A body of 2,500 French troops opened fire on the Waldenses at the bridge of Salaberd. It was a moment of extreme peril, but the intrepidity our mountaineers displayed on this occasion forms one of the most brilliant passages in their struggles for faith and freedom. Hurling themselves on the foe like one of the avalanches of their own mountains, they carried the bridge by assault, with heavy loss to the French, and scarcely any to themselves. The following day, the gallant band were gathered on the heights of Sci; and at that moment all previous dangers and fatigues were forgotten. For, looking southwards, they descried, rising aloft over the lower mountains, those snow-crowned peaks which they well knew looked down on their own Valleys. It was a Sabbath morning. On that mountain summit the whole band fell on their knees, poured out their hearts to God for His mercy to themselves, and implored His protection for the wives and little ones they had left behind. In two days more (August 27), Arnaud with his brave companions reached the Balsille, at the upper extremity of a wild gorge in the Valley of San Martino—a spot destined to be famous in their history. There for the first time for more than three years, the returned Waldenses felt themselves "at home." But much remained to be done. Descending from the Balsille, they discerned a painful change over the face of their loved country—churches in ruins, lands untilled, aliens in faith inhabiting their old homes, hostile troops under strict orders to resist their advance. It was evident that a reconquest was demanded as well as a return. But they believed that He who had brought them back could re-establish them; and, proceeding on the first Lord's day after their return to Sibaud, above Bobbio, they there united in a solemn league, which is known in their history as "the oath of Sibaud," pledging themselves before God to maintain in these Valleys for all coming time their ancient faith, and to be true to one another whatever might befall.

They were once more in their own country indeed, but Canaanites dwelt in the land. Autumn was at hand and a severe winter not far away. Meanwhile, a place of safety and retreat must in any case be provided against the elements, and the malice of their foes more to be feared than any winter. They resolved to establish themselves at the Balsille, a remarkable natural fortress, rising like a pyramid by three rocky platforms, difficult of access, and hemmed in by narrow ravines on either side. No wonder that this spot, like the Castelluzzo and Pra del Tor, is famous in Waldensian story; for if the passage of the Alps by the 800 was marvellous, no less so their preservation at the Balsille, encircled by foes, through the winter, and their escape in spring from that beleaguered fortress.

Their "place of defence" was literally "the munitions of rocks;" and the natural fortifications of the Balsille were carefully strengthened by the military skill of Arnaud.

But how, it may be asked, were so many men to be kept alive during the long months of the coming winter? He who gave manna in the wilderness had arranged for their sustenance. Besides such provision as they were able to procure by making sorties from their place of refuge, they discovered a granary below the snow! The inhabitants of the adjoining Valley had fled on the approach of the Waldenses, leaving their crops behind them unreaped. Immediately thereafter, snow had descended, and here stood the ripened grain beneath it—a supply of food ready at hand—a table spread for God's poor servants to their hour of need! The weary months of winter at length passed away, but with the advancing season came the expected foe. Nearly ten thousand soldiers, led by the renowned general, Catinat, swarmed into the valley of San

Martino with instructions to destroy every returned Waldensian without mercy.

The story of the siege sustained in the Balsille is a thrilling record. One assault after another by selected troops was gallantly repulsed, and with heavy loss to the assailants. At length, in May, the Waldenses were seriously alarmed by seeing cannon dragged by ropes up the narrow defile of the Ger-manasca, and planted in position opposite their fortress. Some years ago we visited that famous spot. We brought home an interesting memento of that visit in the shape of a 16-lb cannon ball, rough and brown with rust, which had been turned up by the plough in a field underneath the Balsille a few months before our visit,—one of "the papal arguments," as one has called them, "for the conversion of the Waldenses!" That ball had lain peacefully buried for nigh 200 years, and now lies before us, a silent witness to the truth of Arnaud's narrative. When the enemy's cannon commenced to play on the fortifications thrown up by the Vaudois, it soon became evident that their position was no longer tenable; and when the night of May 14th, 1690, came down, the possibility of their remaining longer in the Balsille was reduced to a question of hours. Arnaud and his companions were reduced to their last extremity. But man's extremity is God's opportunity. That very evening, there descended from heaven a dense mist which enveloped the whole upper half of the Balsille. God threw His "mantle" (as the Scotch Covenanters were wont to call the grey fog) over His poor servants, and thus they were completely hidden from their enemies in the valley below. At length, when all was at rest in the hostile camp, at dead of night, Poulat, himself a native of their valley, undertook to lead the Waldenses, now reduced in numbers, safely forth. They emerged in silence from the beleaguered fortress, and groping their perilous way along the verge of many a yawning precipice, passed from summit to summit, till, before the dawn broke, they had reached another ancient place of refuge, the Pra del Tor, in the recesses of Val Angrogna. Conceive the consternation of the troops of France and Savoy when, at break of day, they looked up to the Balsille, only to discover that the eyrie was deserted and the eagles fled!

One deliverance arrived to the Waldenses swiftly on the back of another. A day or two after their escape from the Balsille, they were still like partridges hunted on the mountains, hemmed in by exasperated foes on every side. Just then, a messenger arrived with wholly unexpected tidings. Their sovereign, the Duke of Savoy, had quarrelled with France, and had joined the allied Powers. It was a juncture when Victor Amadeus needed all the help he could obtain from his own subjects and well knowing, that none were braver or more loyal than the "heretics" of the Valleys, he sent to offer the Waldenses peace, permission to bring back their families to their old homes, and, best of all, the free exercise of their fathers' faith. And so, the sorely tried but heroic remnant of God's people were preserved, just when they seemed on the point of annihilation. The Lord himself turned again their captivity, and they were like men that dream!

The two-hundredth anniversary of that "Glorious Return" is now at hand. Well may the emancipated and now missionary Church of the Valleys commemorate these brave days of old, and magnify God's goodness to their fathers and themselves. All Evangelical Christendom should sympathise in their jubilee.

HIGHER RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION SCHEME.

MR. EDITOR,—Kindly permit me to state through your columns that I have now sent to every minister and Sabbath School Superintendent, whose address I could obtain, a copy of the Syllabus and regulations of the scheme of "Higher Religious Instruction." I have also enclosed a few collecting cards to each school which the authorities will, I have no doubt, generously acknowledge.

I shall be pleased to furnish additional copies of the Syllabus to intending candidates, or any others who are interested, if they will send me a postal card with address.

The scheme is now fairly launched upon the Church, and, so far, has met with a kind reception. That it may be cordially supported and result in all the good that its most sanguine promoters anticipate, is, I am sure, the prayer of all.

T. F. FOTHERINGHAM,

Convener S. S. Committee.

107 Hazen St., St. John, N.B., Aug. 10th, 1889.

Scotland's Westminster Abbey must be sought for neither in Edinburgh or Glasgow, but on the summit of a richly-wooded though rugged crag, situated half way between the historic town of Stirling and the modern spa of Bridge-of-Allan. On this island cliff, where

Memories immortal hover round

The bold, time-honoured crag, which now enthrones
The guardian genius of his native land,

there was built between the years 1861-69, what is known as the Wallace monument. The monument, which owed its inception to Dr. Charles Rogers, is in the form of a Scotch baronial tower, and rears its crown-shaped head 200 feet above the rock on which it stands. The fitness of the site consists in the fact that Abbey Craig formed the camping-ground for Wallace's army on the night before the battle of Stirling Bridge. A gigantic statue of the hero of Scotland occupies a prominent position over the entrance to the building, but in the statuary hall at the top of the tower other Scotsmen than he have fitting memorial. Marble busts of some eight of Scotland's most famous sons had found a resting-place there, and now another—that of Dr. Chalmers—is added to the number. The proceedings were noteworthy from their being taken part in by the present Moderators of the Established and Free Churches, and by an ex-Moderator—Dr. Frew—of the United Presbyterian Church.