

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

EVANGELISTIC WORK IN ITALY.

THE WALDENSIANS AS HOME MISSIONARIES.

Separating the department of the "Hautes Alpes" in France, from Piedmont in Italy, stands a lofty chain of mountains, the Cottian Alps. On the Italian side of this range of hills, which rise to a height of eleven or twelve thousand feet, is a small district of country which forms a truncated or irregular triangle, having for its base this high Alpine ridge, from Monte Viso on the south to Mont Genevre on the north, while its sides converge eastward towards the town of Pinerolo. This small territory, which measures only about twenty-two miles from north to south, and eighteen miles from west to east, is inhabited by a population whose ancestors have had a singularly interesting history. Upon this history, however, I cannot, in a letter like this, enter at any length; nor is it, I trust, necessary, as most of the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN must be more or less familiar with the past history of the Vaudois, or Waldensians. My chief object on the present occasion is to call attention to the work which is being done by the inhabitants of these valleys for the evangelization of their fellow-countrymen. A few words, however, by way of introduction, regarding the

HOME OF THE VAUDOIS

may not be inopportune. Supposing a visitor coming from Turin to have reached Pinerolo, which may be designated the apex of the supposed triangle, he will see before him four lines of hills diverging from his standpoint, ridges which gradually rise in height until they join the lofty chain from which they were originally thrown off. Between these lines of hills lie valleys through which flow rapid streams, the products of previous winters' snow, all hurrying on to join the River Po as it enters upon the plain after emerging from the rocky defiles at the base of Monte Viso. The three principal valleys thus formed are those of St. Martin on the north, Angrogna in the centre, and Luserne on the south, while from these radiate several subsidiary vales. In these retired valleys, and on the sides of mountain crags dwell the remnant of a people whose story is one of all but superhuman prowess, and one calculated to fire the coldest breast and awaken the liveliest sympathy. The

EARLY HISTORY

of the Vaudois is shrouded in mystery. By their own old historians, such as Léger, Muston, etc., they are traced back to the days of the Apostles, and are said to be descended from those Italian refugees, who, after St. Paul had preached the Gospel in Rome, abandoned their country and found refuge in the recesses of these hills. Modern German criticism, so relentless in its character, while admitting that the Vaudois, long prior to the Reformation, held certain principles in consonance with those afterwards avowed by the reformers, claim that they were not Protestants before the Reformation. Dieckhoff and Herzog, for example, think they took their name from Peter Valdo of Lyons, a merchant of the twelfth century (1150-84) who was the leader of a severe struggle against the corruptions of the clergy of that time. I see that Professor Comba, their own countryman and a distinguished theologian of Florence, has recently adopted similar views. It is but fair to state, however, that there are many who still regard the question as to the origin of the Vaudois as not entirely solved, and who hold, with Dr. Gilly, that "from very remote periods there has been a Christianity in this region different from that of Rome in the dark and mediæval and modern ages, and that this has been handed down to the present era by a succession of martyrs and confessors and other faithful men." However this may be, it is historically certain that from the thirteenth century the Waldensians who had settled in these Piedmontese valleys came to be feared and persecuted as heretics. From that time down to 1848 their history has been little less than one of exile, imprisonment, slaughter and persecution of every description. In that year Charles Albert, their king, granted them a

FREE CONSTITUTION,

emancipating them from all disabilities, and securing to them the unrestricted exercise of their worship throughout Italy. The reaction of 1849, which swept away so many constitutions, happily left intact that of the Waldensians. The ten years which followed gave

them time to realize their position, to acquire the courage and practical skill which their circumstances needed. They occupied this time in preparing evangelists, and in erecting churches in Turin, Genoa, Pinerolo, etc., in opening stations in other towns, and in many ways perfecting the machinery needed by the more extensive work on which they were soon to enter. The expulsion of Austria from Lombardy, the addition of Naples and Sicily to the dominion of Victor Emmanuel by the brilliant campaign of Garibaldi, and finally the entrance of the Italian troops into Rome in 1870, put them in the possession of the whole of the kingdom, from the Alps to the Etna, as a field of labour. From that day, as has been said, began to be fulfilled the prophecy contained in Milton's sublime ode, written to aid them on a previous occasion:

"Avenge, Oh Lord, thy slaughtered saints—
Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields,
That from these may grow
A hundredfold——"

At its meeting in 1860, the Waldensian Synod resolved to establish a theological college in Florence, and, by the liberality of some Christian friends, they were able to open the winter course of study in the Salviati Palace, the former residence of an archbishop, and henceforward this has become the headquarters of all their missionary operations. Up to 1854, the Waldensian pastors had been educated either in Switzerland or in some foreign university. After the constitution of 1848 was granted, they resolved to establish a theological school of their own. To enable them to do so, Dr. Revel visited the United States of America, and there raised funds to endow two chairs. On his return, he and Prof. Geymonat were selected by the Church as the first professors. The school was opened in the Valley of Luserne at La Tour, called Torre Pellice in the Valleys, and was attended by two students, who had increased to nine on the removal, in 1860, to Florence, and from that time to the present the number has ranged from fifteen to twenty-nine, the number of professors being three. At the meeting of the

SYNOD OF 1882,

in the first week of September, at La Tour, a statistical table was presented, the following particulars from which will give an idea of the extent of the mission work of the Church in the Italian Peninsula. The number of regularly constituted churches, 41; stations or churches in course of formation, 36; places where occasional services are held, 152; ordained ministers, 38; evangelists, 18; teachers, 51; colporteurs, 13; communicants, 3,421; candidates for admission, 503; admitted during the past year, 492; pupils in day schools, 1,860; pupils in night schools, 392; pupils in Sunday schools, 1,973. These figures, when compared with those of previous reports, show that in her Roman Catholic mission field, the Waldensian Church, with her staff of 120 labourers, is making slow but steady progress. An addition of 196 to the roll of communicants as the result of a year's work, may appear at first sight to be disappointing, but it must be remembered that mere figures give but a very inadequate idea of mission labour. An important evidence of the growing stability in the Waldensian mission work is the progress made in the amount

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last year, namely, 56,516 lire, equivalent to £2,216 sterling, being the largest sum ever reported. The total amount collected and expended during the year, exclusive of the contributions of the Italian Churches themselves, was 225,569 lire, or £8,845 sterling. The most remarkable event of the Synod of 1882 was the voluntary offer of himself, made by the Rev. G. Weitzker, the Waldensian pastor of Nice, as a

MISSIONARY TO AFRICA

for the period of ten years. He will be supported by the Paris Committee, but he stipulates to retain his standing as a pastor of the Waldensian Church, and to be received back into her service, should he be spared to return to Italy. He takes the place of the venerable M. Collard, who has long laboured at Leribè (Basutoland), but now goes to plant a new mission station on the Zambezi. One of the candidates for ordination, Signor Jalla, also offered himself as a missionary to Africa, and has gone to the Mission House in Paris to prepare himself for the Zambezi Mission. During the last year, the ancient Church of

the Valleys has sent out a second pastor, M. Bounons, to aid M. Hugon, in the Waldensian colony of Rosario Oriental in South America, another sign of the awakening of the missionary spirit amongst the Valleysmen, as well as an evidence of deeper spiritual life.

The missionary work in Italy, I may add in conclusion, is conducted by a committee, composed of five members named by the Synod, and called the "Commission of Evangelization," the president of which is the Rev. Matteo Prochet, of Genoa, who visited Canada a few years ago, and made a most favourable impression on those who heard him preach in very good English.

I must leave for subsequent letters an account of the work being done in Italy by the "Free Italian Church" with which Gavazzi is identified, and that by the Waldensians in their own valleys? I may then take the opportunity of making the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN better acquainted with some of the more interesting features of that work, and of the Valleys themselves. T. H.

Dresden, Saxony, November 28th, 1882.

THE NEW YEAR.—A SERMON TO THE YOUNG.

BY REV. P. M'F. MACLEOD.

Though it was the happy Christmas time, the boy I am going to tell you about was not happy. Willie had a pleasant home and kind friends, and he got the very present he had long been wishing for on Christmas morning. Still he was not contented, and on the last day of the year he quarrelled with his brothers and sisters, and made himself so disagreeable that he had to be sent to his room. Of course that did not make him better. He threw himself down on his bed, and wished he had not such a mean father, and thought how he would give it yet to his brothers and sisters for telling on him. He thought of running away, and went to his drawer and looked out a shirt and some stockings and collars, and tied them up in a towel, thinking while he was making these preparations how sorry his friends would be when they found he was gone, never to come back any more. When he had got everything ready, however, he began to consider that it would not be much fun running away in such cold weather, so he gave up that idea. By this time he was getting hungry, and savoury smells were coming from down stairs, so that he felt a great deal humbler than before, and began to think that perhaps his father was not so cruel after all, and he had no one to blame but himself for his unhappiness. He remembered, now, how quarrelsome and discontented he had been, and he said to himself, "Well, it seems as if I was born bad, for I am always in some scrape or other. I wish I could be good. I've tried hard enough, but it looks as if I got worse, instead of better. I am sure it is no use wishing me a happy New Year unless I can be a different boy than I have been in the past. Our minister is going to preach to children on Sunday. I wonder if he can help me. I will go and hear, at any rate.

On the same day, a girl thirteen years of age was lying in her bed in a comfortable room, a bright fire was burning in the grate, and everything about her showed a mother's tender care. Christmas had been a bright day for her, for she had received many handsome presents, but yet on this last day of the year she was very unhappy. Instead of being out at the skating rink she was compelled to be in bed. She had lots of invitations to parties, and many companions, but there she was confined to her bedroom, and troubled night and day with a terrible cough, getting little sleep, and having no appetite for the good things with which her mother tried to tempt her appetite. "O, mother," she cried (after a hard fit of coughing), "what is the use of having holidays, when one is kept in bed all the time. If this crazy old cough would only go away—but this is always the way with me. Just when I am enjoying myself most, the cough comes back, and I can't have any fun at all." Just when she had said this one of her friends came in and said, "O, Maggie, do you know, our minister is going to preach a sermon to children on Sunday." "Of course," said Maggie, "I know that as well as you, but it is too bad that I cannot get out to hear it." "Never mind," said her friend, "I will tell you about it, and I will listen with all my might. I hope it won't be hard to remember."

At the kitchen fire in a poor cottage a pretty little boy was sitting with his hands on his chin, warming