

THE MISSIONARY WORLD.

THE WALDENSIAN CHURCH AND ITS EVANGELICAL MISSION IN ITALY.

As to the origin of the Waldensians, my confined limits do not allow me to speak about such a controverted question. There certainly is a great interest in knowing whether they were a pure, primitive Church, which never went wrong nor needed reformation, or whether their religious principles were due to Peter Valdo, the merchant of Lyons. After all, we would better leave this question to the historians as a matter of no consequence in the present state and to the present duties of our people.

For ages every man's hand has been against them, though their own has been against nobody except in self-defence. Nor can we wonder at this, because they have ever been, since the twelfth century, a thorn in the side of the Church of Rome, a perpetual witness against the errors of the papacy, a light, greater or smaller, shining in darkness, as the Waldenses' motto says: "*lux lucet in tenebris*."

But though thus preserved from destruction, the Church of the Valleys was not shielded from great and numerous persecutions, or guarded from cruelties such as have been seldom equalled and never surpassed; and all that during not less than five centuries. That such things should have been allowed may seem mysterious, but we know that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church, and that seed is even now bearing fruit, and will, we trust, do so henceforth.

When God prepares a visible instrument for His will and purpose, before everything He breaks it! The last of this series of persecutions has been the most atrocious and dangerous for the existence itself of the little flock. It took place in the year 1686, the year in which all the people were imprisoned—viz., 14,000. The following year about 3,000 emaciated beings crossed the Alps and took refuge in Switzerland; but alas! about 10,000 had perished in loathsome dungeons! The remnant of the exiled were hospitably received, housed and fed by the generous inhabitants of Geneva and other cities of that generous country, or in Germany.

But after living some time in foreign countries, the poor Vaudois were seized with an unconquerable home-sickness, and resolved to return to their native land, to kindle again their lamp. After much prayer and consultation a party of 800 men, led by the Henri Arnaud, succeeded in entering their valleys on Sunday, August 27, 1689.

That glorious return was solemnly celebrated by the Waldenses in the year 1889, and we had the honour of seeing our king partake of our joy, who was there represented by Count Lovera, Prefect of Turin.

The worst days were over, but still the Waldenses had troubles from the Church of Rome, till the beginning of this century living in constant dread of bad edicts. They received moral and temporal aid from their brethren from England and Holland, which enabled them to keep up their schools and their worship.

In the early part of this century three noble men of England—Dr. W. S. Gilly, General Beckwith and the Rev. Dr. Stewart—were providentially sent into the valleys to help us in the foundation of the College of La Tour and in the improvement of the instruction of youth, as in the foundation of a theological seminary. We said providentially, because the 17th of February, 1848, the King of Piedmont, Charles Albert, emancipated the Waldensian Church from the oppressive disabilities and restraints under which she had so long suffered and laboured, and that event found us ready to occupy the field open to the truth of the Gospel.

The barriers were removed, and the Waldenses, under the impulse of their newly-acquired freedom and revived spiritual life, were prompt to undertake the great work for which God had certainly preserved and prepared them. If their "Barbes" had not feared, in the past centuries, to go through all Italy preaching the Gospel, despite the danger their life ran, their descendants were quite decided to continue the interrupted mission—"Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!"

The first mission to the Italians was begun by the Waldensian Church in Turin, and after some years it had congregations in that city, in Genoa, Alexandria and many other places in Piedmont.

When, in 1859 and 1860, all the Dukes of Tuscany, Parma, Modena and the King of Naples were driven from their thrones, and their states annexed to the kingdom of Sardinia, the largest part of Italy was so opened to the Gospel that the ancient Church of the Valleys sent its evangelists, teachers and colporteurs everywhere, including the distant island of Sicily.

To prepare men for that great work of evangelization the theological seminary of La Tour was removed from there to Florence, as better adapted, that city being the Athens of Italy. In the same year, 1860, the Synod appointed a special Committee of Evangelization, as the Table could not provide for the wants of the native Churches in the valleys, and the new congregations spread throughout Italy, which were increasing every day.

Some years later the provinces of Lombardo-Venetia were liberated from Austrian power, and immediately the principal cities, as Venice, Mantua, Verona, were visited by one or more of our evangelists. At last Rome was opened, and our Church, availing itself of this liberty, sent the first pastor who has preached the Gospel to the Romans in modern times, after the fall of its walls. He was the actual president of our committee, the Rev. Dr. Matteo Prochet.

The mission has been gradually extended, and its progress will appear, looking at the following statement:—

Forty years ago the Waldenses had fifteen native Churches in the valleys and eighteen ministers (fifteen pastors and three professors). Now the ministers are eighty-one, and the settled Churches more than sixty.

I give here the statistics of the Waldensian missionary field. Settled congregations, forty-four; missionary stations, fifty-three; ordained ministers, forty-one; lay evangelists, nine, teacher evangelists, eight; teachers or schoolmasters, fifty-eight, colporteurs, eight; Bible-readers and Bible women, eight; in all 132 workers; the regular attendants at the church amount to 6,536; the occasional hearers of the Gospel to 49,929; the number of communicants (members), 4,428, members admitted last year, 586; catechumens last year, 618, the day schools last year, sixty-seven; the attendance of pupils last year, 2,560; the Sabbath schools last year, fifty-seven; attendance of pupils last year, 2,866. There are also seventeen evening schools, with 582 young people or adults.

The present expense of the mission is about \$60,000 per annum, of which about \$16,000 are contributed by the Waldensian Churches, the offspring of the mission.

For the remnant we seek the help of other churches. As our missionary congregations in Italy four times exceed in number the native congregations in the valleys, our agents in the field of evangelization are 132, and they are doing a great work; some of them having many places to visit in a week, we need aid.

We say to all our brethren in faith, in the words of Carey to Pierce and Fuller. "We will go down into the pit if you will hold the rope!"

The progress made by the evangelical movement is not completely indicated if we look only at the figures. As they stand they represent, no doubt, a gain; but it is quite impossible to show by them the general impression produced by the preaching on the many thousands of occasional hearers.

We have ascertained that a general improvement of the public opinion has been the happy result of our labours.

It was evident last year, when the prefects, senators and many members of the Italian Parliament assured their sympathy to our Church, coming to La Tour to assist at the "Second Centenary of the Glorious Return" of our forefathers. They spoke cordially to the descendants of the martyrs, and we felt how important is the change of the opinion and the attitude of our countrymen toward us. The daily press also gave to us many precious tokens of this great and real improvement.

All this awakens rejoicing, but it is not yet the conversion of the multitudes, which we long for so much. Our evangelists have done their best to attract and retain the hearers, but we know that all the country is under the spirit of indifference, unbelief and the deepest superstitions. The more we approach Rome the greater the darkness and errors are. Your Catholicism in America is a great deal less intolerant and superstitious, because the influence of Protestantism forces the papacy to adapt its practices to the milieu in which it lives and works.

When I read an account of the Roman Catholic Lay Congress of 1889, held in Baltimore, I felt more than ever the necessity of evangelizing Italy. Here is the head of that universal army, here is the "man of sin who exalteth himself against all that is called God," . . . setting himself forth as God." England and the United States must keep their ground, but all evangelical Christians share the duty to unite their efforts to hasten that day when we shall hear the mighty voice saying: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great."

Now, in that hope, "we beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with us in your prayers to God for us."—*Pastor J. P. Pons, Torre Pellice.*

RUSSIA is exciting no little criticism and animadversion by her course toward the Jews and the exiles in Siberia. Lately the details have been published of a horrible outrage upon a Jewish lad named Rutenberg, at Bialystok, about one hundred miles from Warsaw, by a Russian medical Man, Dr. Gravonsky. The boy, with some schoolmates, had plucked some apples off a tree, and, being caught in the act, was carried into a stable, where he was brutally branded with lunar caustic on the forehead, chin and both cheeks with the words "Jew" and "thief" in Russian, Polish and Hebrew. A photograph has been circulated showing the horrible branding of this lad's countenance, and has awakened such indignation that the authorities have prohibited its sale or circulation.

MUCH is made by many of the fact that by far the most of the converts in India are from the lower classes. As to this, the *Indian Witness*, Calcutta (as quoted in the *Record*), says. "It is very true that four-fifths of the converts are from the lower castes—many of them, indeed, from the lowest; but those who reject the idea of such people becoming the successors to the Brahmins have not probably given much attention to the rapidity with which many of them rise in the social scale. A youth of eighteen, perhaps the son of a sweeper, becomes a Christian, and begins to study. Three years later he is a student in a high school, and at twenty-five he is the most intelligent and cultured man in the village where he lives. His wife is so superior to all the other women in the village, and is able to help them all in so many ways, that the young couple are everywhere received with honour. Already their sweeper origin is nearly forgotten. How much more in two or three generations!"

THE ENGLAND OF QUEEN ELIZABETH.

Commerce was crippled by monopolies, and of the arable land of the country not more than one-fourth was in a state of cultivation, but large flocks of sheep were kept on account of their wool. Manufactures were only in their infancy. Woollens had been spun and woven only on a small scale throughout the country; Taunton, in Somersetshire, being at that time the most famous for its fabrics of any town in England, and the West of England was to the world's commerce of that day what the North is now. While Liverpool was still a swamp, and Manchester a straggling hamlet, when Leeds was a cluster of mud huts, and the romantic valley of the Calder a desolate gorge, the streets of Taunton, Exeter, and Dunstons resounded with arts and industry, and the merchant ships of Bridgewater and Bristol were going out or coming in from the remotest corners of the globe. The fairest fields, the richest cities, the proudest strongholds lay in this region. The silk manufacture had been established in London upwards of two hundred years; but as yet upwards of a century and a half must elapse before an adventurous John Lombe erects a silk mill at Derby, and so begins the factory system in England. And that mighty cotton manufacture, upon whose prosperity the feeding of so many millions of people depends, at the birth of Shakespeare had no existence in the realm. Our principal foreign transactions then lay with the Netherlands; but already the merchant princes of our island were seeking to bind us in the peaceful links of commerce with all lands. Agriculture was then in the rudest condition; the flower-garden was but little cultivated, the parks of the nobility and gentry serving them for pleasure grounds; some valuable excellent herbs and fruits had indeed been recently introduced into the country, amongst which were turnips, carrots, salads, apricots, melons, and currants, but potatoes were not yet cultivated in Britain, and even for a hundred years afterwards were scarcely known as an article of food, and peas were in general brought from Holland, so that old Fuller might well observe that they were "fit dainties for ladies, they came so far and cost so dear." The cultivation of flax was not neglected, that of hops had been introduced, but as yet our principal supply was from the Low Countries. The old dungeon-like castles of the nobility were giving way to the more commodious halls or mansions, but the houses of the people improved slowly. The art of manufacturing the very coarsest sorts of glass had only been introduced into England seven years, common window-glass and bottles being all that was attempted, the finer articles of glassware being still imported from Venice. Few houses had glass in their windows, and even in towns of importance chimneys were an unknown luxury, the smoke being allowed to escape as best it could from the lattice, from the door, or from openings in the roofs. On a humble pallet of straw would the poor husbandman repose his wearied limbs, and wheaten bread was not used by more than one-half of the population.—*From "Shakespeare's True Life."* By James Walter, Longmans.

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THE CONDITION OF THE WORKINGMAN.

So much has been written and said recently about the condition of the labouring people and so deep an interest is manifested in their welfare that any new thought or suggestion likely to prove valuable to them is received with avidity. That their condition has steadily improved with the advance of civilization no one will deny, but it might be far better to-day than it is had they paid more attention to their health. The thousands and tens of thousands of persons who have of late years suffered from and been unfitted for work by neglect of proper care, could have saved themselves much suffering by using Beecham's Pills, the best medicine in the world for dyspepsia, sour stomach, biliousness, constipation, sick headache, etc. For sale by druggists generally. Price 25 cents a box.

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