

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

EVANGELIZATION IN ITALY.

THE FREE ITALIAN CHURCH.

After the introduction of the Bible into Italy, many persons, by the reading of it, were drawn together, and the nucleus of a congregation formed at various points. Meetings took place amongst several of these elementary congregations as early as 1855; but of those who thus came together, the political preferences at that time were supposed to be too pronounced, while, as regards religious matters, they were charged with holding the doctrines taught among the Plymouth Brethren. They, certainly, as was only to be expected, had for some years no very clear ideas about the doctrines of the Gospel, nor of their relation to each other. Neither had they any very definite views as to the necessity for rule or order, so that, under the circumstances, it would scarcely be wondered at, if they did not speedily settle down into an organized body having formal rules of procedure and fixed dogmas of faith. The distinguished orator, Signor Gavazzi, also was recognized as a leader amongst them, and this, in the estimation of some, was an indication that they were influenced rather by opposition to the Roman Church, and the Government of the Pope, than by the principles of the Gospel. Gradually, however, the mists of imperfections, to use no stronger word, began to clear away. Those who had imbibed decidedly Plymouth views detached themselves and formed themselves into small groups calling themselves the "Original New Italian Church." Gavazzi himself became less political in his speeches, as he grew in the knowledge of the truth, and finally, chiefly through the exertions and wise counsels of the Rev. J. R. McDougall, of Florence, a confession of faith was formulated about 1870, and from that time a new phase of their history commenced.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER CHURCHES.

Many persons in Italy, intimately acquainted with this movement from the beginning, thought that they should have formed themselves into congregations, and in the guidance of Waldensian pastors, which would have been a guarantee for their orthodoxy, while giving greater unity and strength to the Church in Italy. Their not doing so may have created a prejudice in the minds of some Christians against them. The Italian Presbytery of the Free Church of Scotland, so late as 1878, for various reasons stated, refused to recommend the Continental committee of that church to give a grant of money to the Free Italian church, using the following carefully considered language: "When it is a question of formal approval, or recognition of the Free Christian Church by the Free Church of Scotland, the Presbytery feel that they would neither be true to the highest interests of the work of evangelization in Italy, nor heedful of the character of their own Church, if they did not, with their full knowledge of the facts, give it as their decided opinion that the Free Christian Church is not yet in a position to claim or to merit from the Free Church of Scotland such recognition as a grant would undoubtedly involve." It is but right here to state that the Rev. J. R. McDougall, a member of that Presbytery, and also well acquainted with all the facts, objected to this decision on the part of his brethren, as well as to the statement on which it was founded, and that he continues to aid the Free Italian Church, both by personal advocacy of their cause, and by enlisting the sympathies of Christians in Britain and elsewhere on their behalf. I mention these particulars for the purpose of pointing out clearly the distinction made between this branch of the Church and the Waldensians in Italy. I have heard it many times alleged in Italy that the distinction is not understood in Canada and the United States, and that when Gavazzi visits those countries, as he has more than once done, funds have been raised and devoted to the purposes of the Free Italian Church, which some of the donors fancied from the statements made and the statistics given, were equally intended for the work of the Waldensians.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

the thirteenth of the Free Italian Church, met recently in Florence, when Signor Gavazzi was re-elected president, and the various committees nominated. Thirty-four deputies were present on the occasion, as representatives of thirty churches. The various reports submitted indicated progress in the schools, in

the college, and in certain of the funds, such as that for aged and infirm ministers, and that for widows and orphans. Much attention was given to arrangements connected with the representatives of Church 18, the licensing and ordination of ministers, and the furtherance of missions. The work of evangelization is directed by a special committee, with the Rev. J. R. McDougall as treasurer and foreign secretary. Owing to various causes, such as the removal by death, and otherwise, of several liberal members of the Church, by loss through the fall in the rate of exchange, and the withdrawal of the Church's agent in the United States, from which comes a large portion of its support, the finances of the mission are at present in anything but a flourishing condition. It was decided in consequence, that in future the Assembly should meet only once in every three years, to prevent unnecessary outlay. Signor Moreno attended as a deputy from the Wesleyan Mission, and expressed the sympathy and co-operation existing between the two churches.

THE COLLEGE AT ROME

is situated on the bank of the Tiber, and in view of the Vatican, the residence of the Pope. Twelve students are this winter residing within its walls, and several students from outside attend the classes. These are taught by three professors, including Signor Gavazzi, and, until recently, the Rev. Mr. Henderson, whose death, at the early age of forty-eight, has been a great loss to the college, and to the whole church. He was attacked by fever in the course of the summer, and died in Liverpool on the 17th October. He had laboured most faithfully and most successfully since the opening of the college some years ago, and was doing a great work, not only in giving a thoroughly evangelical tone to the young men who were brought under his influence, but also in smoothing difficulties which cropped up occasionally in the Church. He was very highly esteemed in Scotland, where he had been a minister of the Free Church, and in Rome, where, if he had been spared, he would doubtless have done much towards bringing the Free Italian Church into closer harmony with the formularies of other Protestant churches. For the maintenance of this college no special fund has hitherto been raised, so that the treasurer has had difficulty in providing the necessary amount for its support. During a recent visit to Scotland, the Rev. Mr. McDougall has interested several friends in the cause, and has succeeded in getting together a body of trustees, members of several denominations, who are recognized by the Italian Government as owning and holding the property and funds of the Free Italian Church. He now hopes that solid help from the intelligent friends of Italy will be forthcoming. Gavazzi writes that in general the students promise well, and of some high hopes are formed. One of the late Prof. Henderson's students, after preaching with much acceptance before the Assembly at Florence, received license, and has entered on Gospel work amongst his countrymen. From the eleventh

EVANGELIZATION REPORT

recently published, I see that attention is drawn to several cases of persecution in different parts of the Italian peninsula. The following statistics will give an idea of the work: Ordained ministers, 13; evangelists, 16; elders, 50; deacons, 65; deaconesses, 14; colporteurs, 3; average Sabbath morning attendance, 1,220; communicants, 1,750; Sabbath school children, 657; day and night school pupils, 1,250; churches, large and small, 36; out-stations, 35; collections for evangelization, 2,632 francs; collections for all purposes, 13,894 francs.

The missions extend over all parts of Italy. Let me state a few facts regarding some of the stations, selected from extreme points, as detailed fully in the reports:

BELLUNO.—The evangelist Ballarin is greatly encouraged. He finds a large part of the citizens well advanced in the study of the Scriptures, and another part anxiously desirous to be so.

NOVARA.—The Bible was first introduced here by Bartolommeo Borgia, the colporteur of the Scottish National Bible Society, and a remarkable work of grace took place. Recently the Government delegate, whose mind was poisoned by the priests, caused Borgia's wife to close her shop and house after dusk, and set soldiers to watch, so as to find out some breach of this arbitrary order. This they thought they had found in a gathering for conference one evening of several brethren with Signor Destri, the evangelist,

who lived in the same house, and Borgia's son, the evangelist in Milan. The shop was closed altogether. The newspapers were soon filled with protests, and the regulation had to be removed, causing much publicity and much good as a result.

FLORENCE.—The attendance of children at one of the schools is over 200. The authorities, both of the town and the province, countenance the mission, and from each a grant has been received for several years past, the first ever given, it is said, to a distinctively evangelistic movement, and that simply on the ground of real educational service.

MILAN.—The two places of worship in connection with the Free Italian Church have been crowded, and more conversions and new members than in any former year. Brother Cologni is beset by priests in the hospital, who urge him to confess. "I cannot," he replied, "I am an Evangelical. I acknowledge my sins only to God, who sees the penitence of my heart." He is turned out of the hospital, though suffering greatly. The press takes up the case, and reads lessons from the parable of the Samaritan to the priests, and good results follow.

VENICE.—Here not a few of the sons of Abraham have embraced Christ, all these converts having left popery and the world. The hall in St. Mark's Square has become too small to hold all who wish to enter. The old historic Church of Ste. Margherita, near the railway station, was purchased and fitted up for service, being opened in June last, in the presence of 1,500 persons. It is in the centre of the dwellings of the working classes. Alongside the church and Sabbath school has arisen a ragged industrial school, founded by Mrs. Hammond, widow of Capt. Hammond, who fell with Hedley Vicars in the Crimea. She has settled here, and carries on this school along with the evangelist Beruatto, of whom she speaks very highly.

ROME.—Four meetings are held weekly, and are numerous attended. Thirty-one conversions have taken place in the course of the year, but as six months' trial must elapse before admission to the church, only eighteen have joined, and thirteen are under instruction as catechumens. Signor Catalano, professor of physical science in the University of Rome, recently left the Roman church and joined this church, where he has been attending for some time.

NAPLES.—Meetings here always well attended; the members of the Church have proved themselves good and zealous, and go from house to house among their acquaintances, urging the great matters of salvation.

These few paragraphs will give an idea of the work which is being done amongst the nominal adherents of the Roman church in Italy.

T. H.

Dresden, Saxony, 21st December, 1882.

CHILD-LIKE: NOT CHILDISH.

BY REV. JAMES HASTIE, LINDSAY.

Christ's method was, and still is, to send manhood to childhood's school, there to acquire those qualities which are alike necessary for admission to the kingdom, and for advancement in it. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," said Jesus to the disciples at Capernaum, referring them at the same time to a little child then present—a bashful, silent little monitor to them. "Be not children in understanding, howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men," writes St. Paul—1 Cor., 14, 20. *Be child-like: not childish*, this is the gist of Christ's words, and Paul's.

Now, what is it to be child-like? Child-likeness is all summed up in one word—docility. Docility is itself the product of the two cardinal virtues, faith and obedience. Whosoever, therefore, possesses these fundamental graces, and puts them into exercise, is child-like.

Take the first, faith. The child lives by faith. It believes whatever it is told. Guileless itself, it regards all others as trustworthy and guileless as itself. If told that a wasp is a harmless plaything, seizing it with its fingers, the child fondles it, suspecting not the sting till its hand is pierced by the fiery dart, and the truth is discovered by painful experience that a wasp is not a harmless toy. If arsenic be spread on its bread instead of sugar the child carries the food to its lips all confidently, though death be in that food.

It only begins to doubt and suspect when painful experience has proved that "things are not what they