

"I will give you an outline of the work and prospects here. The Island of Elba, as you are aware, lies to the south-west of Leghorn, and is forty-five or fifty miles distant from that place. It has a circumference of some sixty miles and contains a population of about 20,000. There are three missionary stations in the Island, in the three principal towns, viz.: Portoferaiio, Rio and Longone, all of which are supported by the American and Foreign Christian Union. At Rio Marino, the work of evangelization has made more rapid progress than in the other places named, and in fact a greater progress in proportion to the population than in any other part of Italy. They are now building a neat little church, and are most heartily devoted to the diffusion of the truth among their bigoted and superstitious Catholic brethren. I have never seen such perfect harmony, such a bond of brotherly love, such zeal and devotion as is found in the little company of evangelicals at Rio. In Portoferaiio the work is advancing steadily. The most backward, and in some respects the most difficult, is Longone, the station in which I am at present located. I arrived here the last week of June, and although, as you know, but illy prepared to begin so important a work, having been in Italy but eight months, and having a very partial acquaintance with the language, still the way seemed open and my duty clear, and in three days after arriving I tried to preach my first sermon in Italian to a little congregation of seven men. Since that time I have been labouring on as God gives opportunity, scattering tracts, talking, explaining and preaching constantly. Yet the timidity, the actual fear of the Protestant is remarkable. These poor people think, many of them, that the Evangelical, as they call him, is almost an embodiment of Satan. I can truly say that in this little town of, perhaps, 2,500 souls, I am almost perfectly alone, for I am cut off from any fellowship with Catholics; and those who are well-disposed towards the Gospel have such fear of the others, of their little business, or of persecution, that when I go into the streets, for example, they shun me as if I were the subject of some mortal, infectious disease. However, there are two or three poor, but noble men, who have openly professed the evangelical faith, who fear not to talk with me in any place or under any circumstances. This feeling of fear is easily accounted for; it is chiefly the fruit of the teachings of the priests, who are the declared and eternal enemies of all evangelical teachers, and who persuade the poor, ignorant people that the Protestant and Satan are synonymous terms, that he believes nothing, teaches lies, and all who belong to the "new law," as they style it, are lost, lost forever! Then you know that the superstitious element largely obtains in the Catholic character, and hence they are surpassingly suspicious and fearful.

"Notwithstanding all this, I have never yet talked with one who spoke well of the priests. On the contrary, it is evident that almost the universal laity of the Catholic Church in Italy denounce the priests in those intensely bitter and appalling words in which the language so greatly abounds. The general feeling of hatred to the priests (I can call it nothing else) is expressed in terms like these: "We know them, these priests; they have desolated Italy; they have corrupted our brethren; they have ruined our men and women; you care only for our quattrini (our little money;) O, the birbanti! the birbanti!" (a word that seems to gather into itself all that is fearful and wicked.) But for all this intense hatred toward the priests, they are exceedingly fearful of the Protestants.

"We hold our little meeting for worship every Sabbath evening—this is our regular worship. Then we have started a little Sabbath School of four—one man, two girls, and a little boy. But to me the most hopeful and the most interesting is a meeting for women, which I hold every Sabbath afternoon in my own room. Last Sabbath afternoon six came—one of them exceedingly bigoted, she came stealing into my room—arranged themselves along in a row, in front of a little table where I was sitting reading. One of them said to me: "We have come to hear you talk of the Gospel; we are very ignorant, and we want to hear something of this new law." I talked, perhaps, an hour and a half, giving them,

*See after p. 290*