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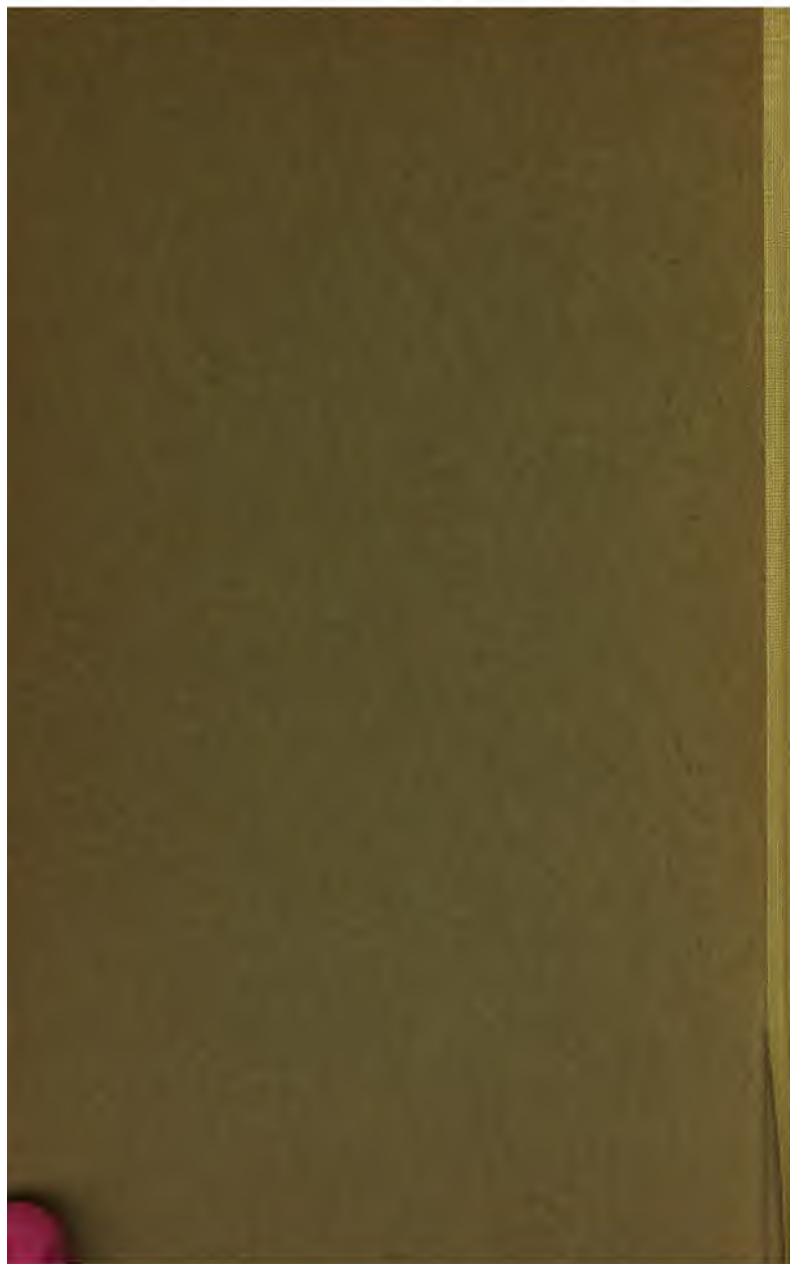
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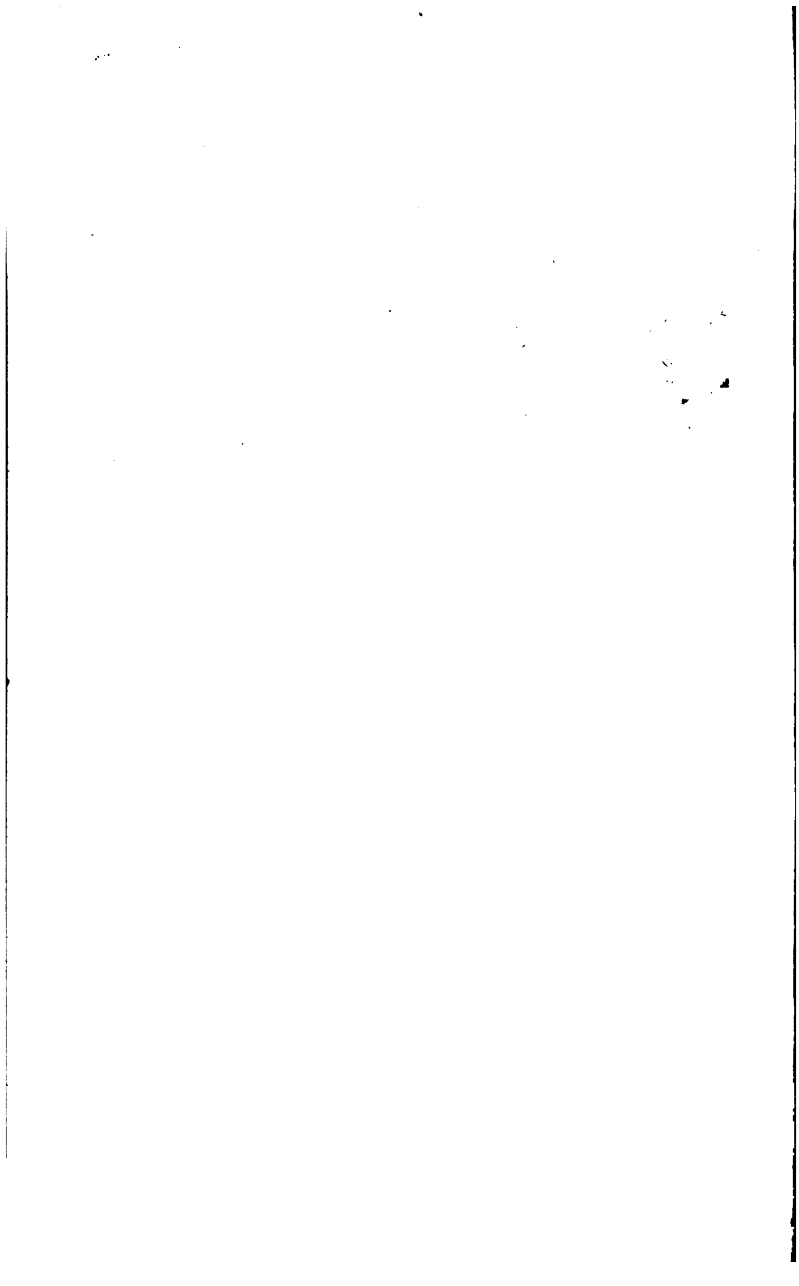
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# WANDERINGS AND MUSINGS

IN THE

## VALLEYS OF THE WALDENSES.

BY

JAMES A. WYLIE, LL.D.,

AUTHOR OF

"THE PAPACY," "PILGRIMAGE FROM THE ALPS TO THE TIBET,"

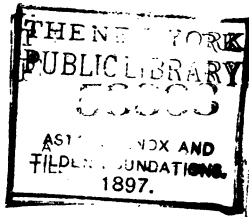
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## A WORD PRELIMINARY.

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Is there room in the world for another book on the Waldenses? I am not quite certain that there is. Nevertheless, I venture to give these pages to the public, only craving leave, while sending them forth, to prepare their way so far by a single word of explanation.

All former publications on the Vaudois have had a main, if not an exclusive, reference to the *people*: this aims at being a PHOTOGRAPH of the *country*. It is "The Valleys"—the scene of so many heroic achievements, and of so many sublime martyrdoms—which I have attempted to call up before the reader's eye in the following pages.

The scenery of these valleys is of unrivalled magnificence. On that ground alone the interest that belongs to them is great; but that interest is much enhanced by the moral halo that surrounds them. Perhaps no one ever read their wonderful history, without feeling a desire to visit a soil which that history has made for ever sacred. It is only a few who can hope ever to realise that desire; and for the sake of that large number to whom a personal visit is out of the question, I have humbly endeavoured to provide this substitute. To what extent it can be accepted as a substitute, or whether it can be accepted as such to any extent at all, others must judge.

I have let the sun-light fall upon the scenery. I have

fixed the reader's eye not alone upon the "laughing valleys" and the "snow-clad mountains" among which his course lies. I have drawn him aside at times to gaze on something grander still,—even the great acts of that mighty drama that passed upon this stage. It is true, the narrative is not continuous; on the contrary, it is somewhat fragmentary. Still, I have said enough to give the reader an adequate idea of what the Waldenses were, and did, and suffered, and of what Christendom owes to them.

I once thought of introducing into the volume some account of the present state of Piedmont, and of its upward workings toward constitutional liberty and a new social life. I had intended to speak of those evangelical agencies which are springing up in Sardinia, and influencing, from a variety of centres, its condition and prospects. And it was my special design to enter with some fulness into the present condition of the Church of the Valleys, which, I feel, must ever be the base of all evangelical action in Piedmont and in the north of Italy. Important materials, which would have much assisted me in the execution of this part of my task, have been kindly transmitted to me from friends at La Torre, and other parts of Piedmont, for which I tender my most grateful thanks. I had, moreover, some suggestions to offer, which, by the blessing of God, might have helped to ameliorate the temporal condition of the Waldenses, and might have aided their spiritual progress. But, as the volume advanced, I felt that I must restrict myself to my first and main object, and leave the other part of my plan to some future opportunity, should it please Providence ever to grant me such, and should no better qualified person undertake it in the meantime.

EDINBURGH, *May* 1858.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *Up the Alps.*

**Alps compared with the Himalayas and Andes—Their Combination of Charms—Lakes—Gorges—Pastoral Uplands—Herdsmen—William Tell—The Waldenses—A Contrast.**

ITALY is bounded on the north by a wall of mountains so goodly of stature, so perfect in symmetry, and so rich in their apparelling of pine forest and meadow, of glacier and rock, that the like is not to be found again on earth.

† The Himalayas and the Andes are loftier, but in everything save mere height above sea-level, these celebrated mountain chains are inferior to the Alps. Neither the Himalayas, though the glory of Asia, nor the Andes, though the pride of the South American continent, can boast that fine combination of opposite charms—that blending of



softness and terror—that union of exquisite loveliness with savage sublimity—which are the glory of the Alps.

Whatever your taste, it will here be gratified. Is it the beautiful you delight in? How soft these meadows, and how bright their verdure! These crystal waters, how noiselessly they glide along! Not so when they sported amid yonder crags, and leaped with the wild shout of young freedom from precipice to precipice; but now they have caught the spirit of the scene in which they are moving, and steal onwards with softened flow, as if they feared to break the deep stillness of the vale which their presence gladdens. That lake, how transcendently lovely? White towns gleam out upon its strand, the vine dips its branches in its waters, and the hushed mountains stand around it, and, as Dante has it,

“From the bottom eye  
Their image, mirror'd in the crystal flood,  
As if to admire their brave apparelling  
Of verdure and of flowers.”

Or is it the wild and romantic that pleases you? Fear not, before evening closes in you shall be gratified to the full. Ever as you go, spots of



romantic grandeur, nooks of fairy wildness and beauty, will all day long be suddenly starting up before you. The mountains will open ever and anon, and disclose far-retreating ravines, with the torrent dashing through them, and the silent pine forest hanging on their sides, and *châlets* nestling on their cliffs, and the tumultuous glacier rolling its frozen billows for ever downwards from yonder naked peaks, yet never able to advance, and chafing perpetually in impotent fury against the invisible power that holds it back from devastating the beauty of the vale beneath.

Or is it the terrible and grand only that can stir you? Well, here are gorges, across which savage rocks fling their black shadows, making it, even at noon-day, dark as night. The light is all around, bathing the valley, tinting the mountain peak, but no ray can enter here: eternal gloom nestles in the pass. Bunyan must have passed this way, and borrowed the doleful images and hideous terrors with which he has painted his "Valley of the Shadow of Death" from this region of shadows. But fear not the darkness; pass on. You have threaded the gorge, but no sooner have you done so than new terrors salute you. Along

the edge of this dizzy precipice, with the mist of the foaming cataract darkening it, lies your path. One heedless step will precipitate you into these boiling waters and black rocks at the bottom. Now you are safely across, and have caught no harm, save only a wetting from the spray, which rises in a perpetual cloud from the cauldron below.

Grandeur yet grows the region. Terror is heaped upon terror; till, at last, the mountains rise around you the very perfection of naked, desolate, savage, appalling sublimity. Surely this must have been the scene of some fearful war in days gone by. It was, in truth. Mightier combatants than man have here striven in fierce conflict. How short-lived, comparatively, are the marks of man's strife! The greatest battle that ever was fought has left no prints which a few months could not blot out. Spring comes with her buds, and summer with her flowers, and erase with kindly touch the red stains, and the unsightly scars, which the shock of armies and the hideous engines of war have left on the spot. The flowers grow where the warrior's blood was spilt. The vine now flourishes on the plain of Marengo; the corn waves on the field of Waterloo. The heights of the Alma, and the vales

of Inkerman, have resumed their verdure, and are green and flourishing as before the iron showers of that terrible winter which so often stained their turf with gore, and piled the slain upon them in ghastly heaps.

But this region, after untold centuries, remains scathed and blackened, as if the conflict that so devastated it had ended but yesterday. None but Heaven's bolts could have imprinted scars like these. Yes, earthquake, and tempest, and lightning—three redoubtable wrestlers—have here tried their strength in the attempt to overturn these giants of earth. But the giants have conquered, though they have come not unscathed out of the conflict. Look here! You see that hideous gash in the mountain. Earthquake only could have cleft it so. How it must have been buffeted and tossed, rocked and strained, in the gripe of its terrible enemy, before it submitted to be so wounded! You see these pinnacles, so torn and jagged, that shoot into the sky! These tell of the tempests of unnumbered winters. Cast your eye on these masses that strew the vale below. None but the artillery of the heavens could have torn them from the mountain's crest, and left them where they are.

Not a footstep here but is marked with the memorials of a war, that began and ended ages before our planet had become the scene of man's strife. "Who shall live," asks the seer of Moab, referring to a time in the future pregnant with terrible events, "when God doeth this?" Who could have lived in those ages of the past, when that war was proceeding, of which these old rocks still bear the marks—when earthquake was rocking the earth, and thunder shaking the heavens—when subterraneous fires were rending the stony ribs of the globe, and projecting to the sky, in jets of molten granite, the great mountains—and old ocean, disquieted in its bed by these upheavings, was invading the dry land, and again was rolled back in mountain billows to its seat?

But onward! These terrors of dark gorge and riven mountain are not for ever. Beyond lie sweet and gentle uplands, where the flowers bloom, and the sunlight fleckers the wild, and the flocks depasture beside the young streams. Let us away to these rural scenes. Their simple beauty will refresh the eye, and grateful to the foot will be their turf.

And are there not dark gorges on the road of

life? Yes, very dark—far darker than any the traveller meets with in the Alps. Perhaps, reader, you have traversed some of these doleful passes. If not, you have been very fortunate: let me rather say, very unfortunate. It is not good to be always in the light: it is well at times to walk in the shade, nay in darkness. That little flower, all bloom and tenderness, that is to die in a week and be forgotten, has been nourished solely by the light of the summer's sun, and the showers of the summer's cloud, while yonder pine, that bears itself so bravely on the crest of that mountain, which is so goodly of bough and so firm of fibre, has borne the buffetings of many a winter, and will bear those of many a winter to come; and, when at last it falls, full of years and honours, beneath the woodman's axe, it will still do service to man. Launched upon the main, and spreading its white wings to the breeze, it will carry the noble vessel, with its precious cargo, to far distant shores.

Yet are these gorges on life's road terrible to the senses and to the imagination. The traveller when he approaches them, starts back, afraid to venture within a shadow so dismal. But forward he must. The tall cliffs of difficulties wall

him in; step aside he cannot, turn back he cannot: through the darkness he must go. He is apt to cast hope away, and to say, *Good* I shall never see more; welcome sorrow, welcome sadness; this shadow shall be my companion to my journey's end. But no: he is mistaken. There is sunlight beyond. Let him bear up, and press onward. There await him days of honourable and useful labour; there remains good to be reaped, and joy to be tasted by him. And for these he will be all the fitter, that he brings to them a spirit chastened and disciplined by the darkness through which he has passed. Out then, traveller, into the light.

Now we have emerged on the breezy, sunny uplands. How cool the air—how springy the turf! The black gorge and the frowning cliff, the pine forest with its solemn gloom, and the torrent with its thundering dash, are now all beneath us. Already, almost, have we forgotten these terrors. This peaceful scene, how it cheats us into the belief that what we have just passed through was nothing more than a troubled vision! We begin to think of it as we do of a dream when the dawn has broke. Who could have ima-

gined that the mountain had in reserve such store of quiet, rural, grassy scenes, at altitudes like these? Yet, though hung here on the brow of precipices, and spread out on the top of the tempest-worn battlements of the mountain, they sleep as peacefully as do the downs by the sea-shore, or the meads in the low-lying valley. Vast and spacious they are; with now a fine mottling of shadow upon them, and now an unbroken flood of sunlight, for here the clouds are mostly beneath us. Here they swell into grassy, wavy knolls, and there they expand into a goodly valley, too high-lying for receiving adornment from shrub or tree. A few humble *châlets* are thinly sprinkled over its surface; a rich lacing of white streams impart life to it; and in the far-off sky glittering peaks of silver, which the evening transmutes into gold, look down upon it. And here, again, the wilds run upwards, in one long, unbroken, magnificent swell, to where the mountain displays its supreme glories within an unscaleable breastwork of glacier and rock.

Let us lay us down on these open wilds. It is sweet, wearied with climbing, to lie thus extended at one's ease. How fragrant the grass—how re-

freshing the airs, as they come softly down upon us from the eternal snows of the summit!

“ These are not wanting ; nor the milky drove,  
Luxuriant, spread o'er all the lowing vale ;  
Nor bleating mountains ; nor the chide of streams,  
And hum of bees.”

Far beneath is the fretting, hurrying, noisy world : its cares, its strivings, its ambitious projects and hopes, are all far, far below that cloud which lies sleeping at our feet. But it is quite possible to ascend where one cannot even have a glimpse of the world below, or so much as hear the faintest echo of its noise, and yet not be able to forget it. It is easier to drag the body up to the hill-top than to raise the soul. We may carry with us all the world's cares and passions in our hearts. Napoleon did so. Through scenes as romantic, wilds as rural, he carried in his one bosom a tempest big enough to cover Europe with conflagration and slaughter. To wilds as secluded as these has many an anchorite transferred the world's worst passions, while many an unpretending man has lived all his days in the midst of the world, and all the while been above it. As sings the author of “ The Task ”—



“ Not that I mean to approve, or would enforce  
A superstitious or monastic course :  
Truth is not local; God alike pervades  
And fills the world of traffic and the shades,  
And may be fear'd amid the busiest scenes,  
Or scorn'd where business never intervenes.”

Here are herdsmen with their kine—simple men, unversed in the world's ways. The “wars and rumours of wars” that agitate the city's population, never disturb them—the topics so fiercely discussed by the *ouvriers* of Paris, of Turin, and of Vienna, never intrude on the solitude of these mountains. Were these herdsmen to find, some fine morning, that Mont Blanc had gone amissing, or the Schreckhorn been carried off in the night by an earthquake, and its place a blank in the great chain when the sun rose—then, indeed, would they be startled. But as to political matters—why, a whole continent may be in flames, or half-a-dozen kingdoms might be blotted from the map of Europe, without their being at all aware that anything extraordinary had happened. The “Danubian Principalities,” and all such questions, are as intelligible to them as is the parallax of the fixed stars, or the precession of the equinoxes. The great Powers of Europe they could as soon

name as they could the asteroids. Their whole year is made up of but two long days—a summer one spent on the mountains, and a winter one passed amid the storms and torrents of the vale. When they have fulfilled their allotted number of such days, they cease to be seen any more upon the pasture-grounds. Another leads forth their flock, and an additional furrow in the quiet graveyard below, without headstone or memorial of any sort, is all that remains to tell that they ever existed.

Yet, at times there will arise among these men prodigies of patriotism and valour. Of these herdsmen came WILLIAM TELL. We say *prodigies*, for such things are out of the natural course; and when they do occur, it is in the long cycle of six centuries or so. In the remote past of Switzerland is seen the gigantic form of William Tell. But he stands alone: there has been no second William Tell. Now turn your eyes to the valleys to which we are going, and mark the difference. Among the Waldenses each valley had its William Tell: nay, not one Tell, but hundreds. Each age of that remarkable people had its race of patriots and heroes, every one of whom had a heart as brave,

and an arm that could do as marvellous deeds, as those that have given undying fame to the warrior-herdsman of Uri. And if of the heroes of the Waldenses it should be said that individually they do not bulk so large, or seem quite so gigantic as Tell, it is because they are many, while Tell is but one. He occupies the field of Swiss history alone. His height is set off by the pigmy forms innumerable of his countrymen. But in "the Valleys," we find not here and there a hero, but the whole race heroic—each man a *Tell* when occasion offered. For it needed but the approach of a hostile force to transform the herdsmen of the hills, and the peasants of the vale, into patriots and warriors—mighty men of valour, who drove the mailed chivalry of Savoy before them, down the passes of their valleys, a routed, broken, panic-stricken crowd, as they might drive the herds down their mountain slopes.

Now, why this difference? From some cause it must spring, and surely it is worth while tracing that cause. To the student of nations, and not less to the statesman who is occupied in the practical business of guiding the destinies of nations, it cannot but be a deeply important problem, why

is it that two nations, so alike in all outward respects—living under the same climate, inhabiting the same chain of hills, engaged in the same avocations, equal in all natural advantages—should yet be so unequal, socially and politically, that, while the one nation has but one great hero to shew, and can point to but one heroic era in its annals, the other counts its patriots by hundreds, and exhibits a history which is one bright page, one long record of glowing and glorious deeds, from beginning to end. Verily, there must be a cause, and a potent one too, for this remarkable contrast—a cause not operating upon the surface merely, but descending and penetrating the very soul of the people; endowing it with a new life, ushering it into a new existence, and rendering it amenable to the force of mighty motives and the attraction of glorious hopes, of which before it had not so much as dreamed—an influence unfelt by the one people, who continued to slumber from generation to generation, and passed away, leaving as little memorial that they had ever been as the grass that waves on their meadows, or the shadows that chase each other across their hills; while the other, on whom this influence operated, grew up to

the loftiest stature of the patriot, and challenged for themselves an equal place by the side of Rome's greatest heroes. An equal placè, did we say?— they are higher, by the whole head and shoulders, than Rome's tallest men. Nor did their deeds simply link their own names with undying renown. That would have been a small matter. Fame they sought not. They earned for their children a heritage of freedom, and bequeathed to the world an example which will never cease to instruct and stimulate it, while patriotism and valour bear value among men. Need we name that influence? It was the religion of the Bible.

## CHAPTER II.

*Down the Alps.*

Zigzags—Mountain Torrents—Summit of Pass—The Four Great Passes into Italy—St Gothard Pass—Grandeur of the Pass—Tyrolese Alps—Helvetic Alps—Pennine Alps—Cottian Alps—Maritime Alps—True Taste for Scenery Rare—Grandeur of the Alps as seen from Lombardy.

BUT we forget ourselves. The day wears, and before the shadows fall, and the star of eve appears above yonder mountain-crest in the east, we must seek the hospice on the summit. Up then, and let us be going. We have yet an ascent of some hours before us. We are yet a long way from these white hills over-head. In fact, although we have been climbing all day, we seem scarce nearer to them than we did when we started in the morning. To stand on the white strand of the lake and look right up to the mountain's summit, the distance may not seem immense, but try to climb thither, and soon you begin to entertain a truer

notion of the way. You set out with the resolute purpose of not giving in till you have set foot on these gleaming snows. The morning is fresh—the mountain air exhilarates you—the pulse beats full and strong—and the step is quick. You drink in ardour from the surpassingly glorious objects around you. You traverse league after league of the long, winding, and gently ascending paths at the bottom of the mountain. You look up. At an awful height above you are still the white summits. You exchange the green valleys—with their orchards and their crags, round which the mantling vine hangs its ripening clusters—for dark pine-forests and narrow thunder-rifted gorges. You press manfully forward and upward. You pass, in long and toilsome succession, ravine after ravine, over which black cliffs lean fearfully, and pine-forests project their solemn shadows, and the torrent makes re-echo with its roar. You wind and climb, expecting that the next turning, or the next reach of the ascent, will land you on the summit, or at least within easy distance of it. You escape, at last, from this labyrinth of rock and wood, and come out upon the grassy shoulders of the mountain, amid its breezes and

wild flowers and herds. A feeling of despair seizes upon you, for still, hung at apparently the same immeasurable distance above you, are the snows towards which you have been all day climbing. The more you ascend, the higher the mountains seem to rise. You feel that you might as well attempt to scale heaven itself.

But our motto must be "Excelsior"—a right proper motto in all undertakings demanding steady purpose, unflagging perseverance, and heavenward aspirations; as what good and noble enterprise does not? We *must* pass the summit—we *must* see Italy. Well then, we begin to lay siege to the mountain, as it were. We now approach it by mighty zigzags, as if it were a fortress, and were to be taken only by stratagem. And a fortress it truly is, where old Winter lies encamped within lines of eternal congealation, and whence he sallies out at times, and makes war upon the nether world, with his squadrons of whirlwinds and snow-drifts, and his artillery of fiery bolts. But we mean not to disturb the old grim warrior, but to pass his territory in the quietest way possible, and no ways to provoke a battle with him.

We approach the summit by a magnificent



flight of grand zigzags, each parallel lifting us higher above the mountain ridges, and chasm-like mouths of valleys below, and bringing us perceptibly nearer the great cone of the mountain. The air gets cooler—it grows at last to be like that of a day of fine clear frost in winter. The pastoral character of the uplands ceases, and black rocks take their place—here rising in castellated crags with a powdering of snow, and there leaning in precipices over the path. The stream which at our starting was a full river, thundering over rock or rolling still and slow through meadow, is here, near its source, dwindled to a tiny rivulet. It steals down from the ice above in a thread of silver, and, passing on its way in silence, joins itself to hundreds of rivulets as tiny as itself, as if it courted companions in these solitary wilds. Grown at length to be a torrent, it indulges in all sorts of freaks and sports—it begins to leap headlong over rocks and precipices, and getting into high excitement by its own noise, answers the echoes of its thunder among the hills with ceaseless shouting and never-ending uproar. But here, how soft its flow! You are aware of its presence only by its silvery gleam in the

ravine, as you wind your way beneath these dark cliffs.

“ A few steps may bring us to the spot  
Where, haply, crown'd with flow'rets and green herbs,  
The mountain infant to the sun comes forth,  
Like human life from darkness.”

The silence, how deep! It is like that of night—of still, tomb-like night. In fact, the silence of the stillest night in the world below is nothing to it. There comes here no sound of convent bell, no note of bird, no lowing of herd, no chirp of grasshopper or insect even. It seems as if Egypt's angel had passed over the world, and left you the only living man in it; or, rather, as if all earth's tribes were standing mute and silent, waiting, in fearful suspense, for the peal of the archangel's trumpet. A shadowy feeling of mingled solemnity and terror creeps over you. You hasten your steps. At last you are on the summit of the pass.

You are at once thankful and disappointed—thankful that the toil of the ascent is at last accomplished, and disappointed that your path does not lead you higher, and that, after all your climbing, you must rest satisfied with something a good way short of the supreme summit, and that, instead of treading with your foot these glorious

heights, you can only stand and look up at them. Oh, how you would have liked, from these heaven-kissing peaks, to have surveyed the Alps—to have seen the horizon, embracing in its vast circle gleaming mountain peaks in multitude like the stars of heaven—or, turning to the south, had a glimpse mayhap of Italy, afar off, with the bright light upon her green robe, and appearing, by contrast with the naked and desolate wastes around you, like the celestial plains seen in vision! But if you miss the pleasure of such an enterprise, you escape its dangers. And these are by no means insignificant. Radiant as the mountain seems, with all at rest about it, it abounds with thick-set snares, which lurk unseen beneath its dazzling surface, and lie in wait, as it were, for the traveller. There are fathomless crevices—there are blinding tempests—there are precipices which run sheer down many hundred fathoms—and there are whelming avalanches, which the slightest disturbance of the air may draw down upon you, consigning you to a tomb never to be opened till the Great Day. Rest satisfied, then, with the pass, and tempt not heights which it was not meant the human foot should climb.

The great passes into Italy are four—the Splügen, the St Gothard, the Simplon, and the Mount Cenis. We mention them in the order in which they lie from east to west. There are a great many minor passes, traversable on mules or in light charrs, with green nooks and white peaks lying all along them like pearls. But these four are the great passes, and the most commonly sought by the traveller, by reason both of the excellence of their roads and the magnificence of their scenery. It is the genius of conquest which we have to thank for these great highways, which a better age will doubtless turn to nobler uses than the original ones. The Mount Cenis route the author has traversed oftener than once. It has its fine points, but, on the whole, is the tamest of the four great Alpine routes. It rises 6780 feet above sea level, and, of course, falls short, by some four or six thousand feet, of the snow-clad summits beside it. Its chief charm, and it is no small one, is the abruptness of the descent towards Italy, enabling the traveller to accomplish an almost instantaneous transition from the bare wilds and wintry climate of the mountains to the eternal summer at their feet. For, let the traveller come

at what season he may, even when winter enchains northern Europe, he will find summer waiting here to conduct him over plains bathed in light—such light as can come only from an Italian sun—and fields strewn with perpetual flowers.

The Simplon pass, the next on the east, is about two hundred feet lower than Mount Cenis. Its highest point is 6578 feet above sea level. Higher than either is the pass of the Splugen. The person who scales the sixteen zigzags that lead up the face of that mountain will find himself at a height of 6814 feet above the sea. This is but a few feet lower than the St Gothard. The St Gothard the author traversed on foot last autumn. The pathway on either side is one long walk of grandeur and sublimity. It is entitled to be called the centre of Europe, for from thence its four great rivers go forth. Within a radius of twenty miles, from the St Gothard as a centre, the following rivers have their rise:—The Rhone, which runs westward, and waters France; the Rhine, which, taking a northerly course, pours its milky stream through the valleys of Switzerland and the flats of Belgium and Holland; the Danube (more remotely), whose dark waters roll eastward, and lave

the plains of Germany and the cities of Austria ; and finally, the Ticino, which flows rapidly off to the south, as if impatient to reach its own bright land of sunny Italy. It is the St Gothard route which the author has had in his eye mainly in his present sketch of the Alps, and the passage across them.

We were on the summit of the pass, standing in the midst of its terrors and splendours, and it is hard to say whether terror or splendour predominates. We were putting the question whether we did well to regret that we could not climb higher, and from these naked peaks gaze on sublimities and terrors greater still. We think we do well not to regret this. The highest point in the landscape is seldom the best for seeing its beauties. It is like the highest station in society, which of all positions is perhaps the least advantageous for surveying the scenery of the moral and social world. In both cases gradation is lost, and what a charm gradation imparts to both physical and moral scenery we need not explain. To stand in the vale and see the quiet green slopes overtopped by the pine forests, the pine forests surmounted by the naked nodding cliffs, the cliffs by the sharp wavy ridges

of the mountain, and these again by the white summits which rise sublimely above all, is fine indeed—is surpassingly grand; but it is not nearly so fine, it is in fact comparatively poor, to stand on these summits and look downwards. Many have ascended Mont Blanc. Here, on the highest stand-point that Europe furnishes, and with a vast and glorious panorama around, one might think the prospect would be magnificent and the description correspondingly glowing. With France, Italy, and Switzerland at the feet of the spectator, the tamest pencil might catch fire, and the most prosaic pen might become poetic. So one should think; yet we know of no description of the view from Mont Blanc that is more than passable. And for this we suspect there is a good reason, even that there is no good prospect to be had. You have overshot the mark: you have ascended too high: below you is only a shadowy picture, a confused blending of all forms and colours, of lakes and cities, of mountains and plains, without sublimity, and even without order. And so in the moral world: to stand on a throne and look down upon society, must be something very like standing on the summit of Mont Blanc

and looking down on the nether world. The natural order is reversed. The charm of gradation is flown. You cannot see peer rising above peasant, or the various ranks and functions standing one above another, and swelling upwards in seemly harmony and noble grace to the golden top of the edifice. Instead of this, society, viewed from the point supposed—a throne to wit—sinks to comparatively a dead level : its various ranks are blended and massed together into a picture without those points of prominence and relief that strike the imagination and awaken the sympathies. To take a full and vigorous interest in life, it is necessary to have something higher than ourselves to look up to.

But here, where we now stand, we have assuredly no reason to regret that we have ascended so high, or that we can ascend no higher. What a scene of glory around us ! What a crowding together of stupendous objects ! On all sides is inconceivable, indescribable, dazzling magnificence ! Nothing that is little has place here. The scene disdains to receive aid from tree or flower, or to receive any adornment whatever. It rises upon the sight, vast, stern, and unspeakably sublime.



Here is glory and power, strength and majesty. How these piles stand up in the firmament, calm, silent, everlasting, in their garments of untrodden snow! Here they shoot up in pinnacles and spires, there they swell into domes; here they rise in awful, tower-like, compact strength and form, and yonder they run off in long glittering walls, range beyond range, looking like the battlements of some celestial city. Summer's flowery tread was never on these mountains. Evening never sowed them with her pearly dew, nor did morning ever bathe them in her gentle showers. Here distil eternal snows: here winter, through the long centuries, piles up his heaps, and frost builds his battlements of ice. Yet does the sun clothe them in glory, and make them the wonder of earth. The thought is an exciting one, that while you stand here gazing face to face on their terrors, and can even touch their very snows, they are at the same moment flinging their splendours over kingdoms, and rivetting and delighting the gaze of cities and nations.

The Alps have their rise in Hungary. There they sprout up above the plain, their gentle summits giving but small promise of those gigantic

masses which they are destined, before their course is accomplished, to uprear to heaven. In the Tyrol they swell into purple hills of moderate height, most beautiful of mould, and enchantingly rich in deep shadings and sunlight gleams. They hold on their course to the west, and now they uplift their summits above the clouds. Snowy domes, as the Ortelles, begin to appear, flashing back the sun's splendour at noon, and reflecting his gold at setting. They run on still, and their white summits rise higher; mountain is piled upon mountain, and peak rises above peak, as if, like the giants of old, they meant to assault the heavens. First come the stupendous piles of the Helvetic Alps; conspicuous among which are the sublime peaks of the Jungfrau, or Virgin's Horn, the craggy, worn summit of the Wetterhorn, or Peak of Tempests, the precipitous Shreckhorn, or Peak of Terrors, and the gloomy Finster-Aarhorn, or Peak of Darkness. Next come the Pennine Alps, which have the honour to number amongst them the monarch of the whole chain, Mont Blanc, which uprears his form in unapproachable majesty, and looks down upon the lower, yet still mighty forms around him as a monarch might upon the nobles

of his realm. Of Mont Blanc and his attendant mountains one might say, as Shakspeare has made Pericles say of the king his father—

“ Had princes sit, like stars, about his throne,  
And he the sun, for them to reverence.  
None that beheld him, but, like lesser lights,  
Did veil their crowns to his supremacy.”

Standing not far from him, and almost rivalling him in stature, and perhaps excelling him in beauty, is Monte Rosa. Next come the Cottian Alps, renowned for the rich luxuriance and romantic grandeur of their gorges and valleys, and yet more renowned for the mighty deeds of which they were the theatre; for here dwelt a heroic race, the Waldenses, who worshipped the God who made the earth and the heavens, while the rest of the nations bowed down before gods of wood and stone. We love these mountains, and their snowy summits awaken within us deeper feelings by far than any which mere magnitude of form or grandeur of peak and glacier can ever inspire us with. Ye heavens, withhold not your dews, nor, ye clouds, your rains from these hills! Drop in fatness upon them, and let plenty ever fill the presses and barns of the children of those men who fought so hard a fight for Christendom! Last of all come the Maritime

Alps, which sweep on, in lessened grandeur and diminished height, till they touch the shore of the Mediterranean near Nice. There the Alps take end, having accomplished a goodly line of some six hundred miles.

The Alps, we have said, are the goodliest of mountain chains. Take them all in all, their like is not again on earth. Not that they are the loftiest; they might have been loftier, and yet not nearly so imposing. Enter their portals of rock, it is like passing within a new world. What marvels! what unexplored riches! what visions of beauty and glory start up around you! You have suddenly lighted upon an exhaustless mine of grandeur. Locked up to all, save to the man who, with staff in hand, will venture within their stony bars, is an untold wealth and profusion of the grandest images, which, as mere images, are valueless, but which are of great value as the suggesters of noble thoughts. And, in our judgment, no one can have a true appreciation of the scenery of the external world, or can receive pleasure from it, who does not possess strongly the associative faculty, and is able behind the external world to behold the moral. To the man who possesses this

faculty, nature has the power of filling his mind with the grandest ideas.

“ To them the deep recess of dusky groves,  
Or forest, where the deer securely roves,  
The fall of waters, and the song of birds,  
And hills that echo to the distant herds,  
Are luxuries excelling all the glare  
The world can boast, and her chief favourites share.”

The exercise is not merely a mental or emotional one; it is, to a large extent, moral. It is not the sense of *beauty* only that is conveyed into the soul, it is the sense of *good* also. The pleasure comes not from seeing *without* you an object of a certain form or a certain colour; it comes from feeling *within* you the stirrings of noble desires and purposes. The enjoyment of nature not only refines the tastes, it strengthens the virtues. Of course, we mean all this of a *true* enjoyment of nature, for hundreds and thousands, every year, run up and down over all Europe, who have no real taste for nature all the while—no power of holding communion with her. They will go to see nature just as blind men will go sometimes to an exhibition; or as deaf men will go to a concert; or, to borrow an illustration from a class of persons who make yet greater mistakes, as some men will go to

church, imagining somehow that their tastes are religious.

But not only is it *within* that the Alps have the power to charm you with images of grandeur and magnificence. On their form and outline *without* are strongly stamped the characters of power and glory. Descend their southern slopes, and take your stand on the plain of Lombardy. Where on earth is there such another spectacle as that which meets the eye on turning to the north? This goodly plain looks as if it had been put here of purpose that from it, as from a stage, you might view the Alps. The sight is one of the grandest on earth. From the gates of the morning to the setting sun, the mountains run on in a line of continuous towering grandeur. Their peaks are innumerable as the stars of heaven. Eternal ice crowns their summits. Their sides are grandly varied with overhanging rocks and waving pine-forests, and their feet are planted amid knolls wavy with woods and golden with grain. What a goodly sight it is to see the morning break upon them! To stand and mark their golden flashing top, then their long descending silvery robe, and, last of all, the broad green fringe of pasturage

and foliage that swathes their feet, breaking through the haze, as the light travels down their vast sides, is somewhat like witnessing a new creation. He that hath not seen the Alps from the plain of Lombardy can scarce be said to have seen them at all.

“From these summits,” said Napoleon, addressing his soldiers in presence of the Pyramids, “forty centuries look down upon you.” From the tops of the Alps how many centuries look down upon us? Forty? Compared with the age of the Alps what were forty centuries? A span—an handbreadth! History has no date, the most ancient even, which is not but as yesterday compared with their countless years. The tempests of ages which had rolled away into the past before man appeared upon the scene tore their summits, the hoary pre-Adamite ocean laved their feet, the Mastodon, and other mighty and now extinct behemoths, have trodden their sides, and yet there are the Alps, untouched, beauteous, strong, as if the rosy flush of the first dawn had not yet faded from their brows.

## CHAPTER III.

*Alps of the Waldenses.*

The Waldensian Mountains as seen from Turin—Walk Thither—  
Meanings of the Alps—The Railway Car—The Passengers—The  
Men—The Women—Beauty and Dress—Italian Talkativeness—  
Walk from Pignerollo to La Torre—Associations—Enter the  
Mountains.

IN the bend of the great chain of the Alps, where the Cottian range terminates, and the Maritime range begins, and where the mountains sweep round to the south-west, to reach the Mediterranean, lie the Valleys of the Waldenses. The openings of these valleys may be seen—with a veil of shadows upon them, woven by the sun and the mountains—from the terrace of the Capuchin monastery at Turin. The distance looks some twelve miles across the plain of Piedmont. The real distance, however, is not less than thirty miles, but the eye miscalculates, being unaccustomed to such magnitudes as are here before it. A few hours, you



think, will take you thither, but should you start with the dawn, you will find the shadows of eve on your path before your journey has ended. You need no one to signal you the way. You have only to march right on Monte Viso, whose snow-clad summit is by much the highest in the Cottian chain, and is one of the finest peaks in all the Alps.

But how majestic the mountains on your right! The summits of the great central chain are white with the snows of untold winters. From this supreme barrier, lesser mountains descend towards the plain, falling in bold gradations and successive ridges, and sending out their spurs into the valley, as the monarch of the forest does his roots. The forms these mountains assume are as various as the heights to which they rise. Some shoot up in pinnacles to heaven—others rise in massive castellated form and strength—others run along in naked escarped crests, torn by the bolts of heaven and the storms of centuries, and looking, to compare small things with great, like the ramparts of some mighty city which the shot and shell of beleaguering foes had riven and shattered in every conceivable way. At the feet of these giants are

gentler hills, which swell upwards, mantled with pine forests and chestnut woods, finely relieved by the brighter green of their pasturages.

“ Here lofty trees, to ancient song unknown,  
The noble sons of potent heat and floods  
Prone-rushing from the clouds, rear high to heaven  
Their thorny stems, and broad around them throw  
Meridian gloom.”

Low among these hills lies the entrance to those lovely valleys which the Lord of hosts hath vouchsafed to the Waldenses. Here, from a venerable antiquity, that remarkable people have maintained unswervingly their pure scriptural faith, and kept alive the lamp of the gospel, despite persecutions and woes innumerable. Led out of the mystic Egypt by the hand of God, and brought into this place of liberty and security, they have dwelt around the Ark, and though the gates of hell have, times without number, mustered on this plain, and warred against that ark, they have not prevailed.

From Turin you may go to “the Valleys” on foot. You will have the goodly hills as companions all the way—and fascinating companions you will find them, if you have that within you which can interpret their sayings. All depends on this. If you want this faculty, they will stand sullen and

silent all day—not a word will you have from them. But if they find you a man of the right spirit, they will be as communicative as you please. They will talk to you of glorious things. They will speak of martyrs—of struggles for liberty and religion—of men once encompassed with suffering and sorrow, but now come out of their great tribulation, and occupying a place before the throne, with palms as green as the verdure of their own valleys, and robes as radiant as those starry peaks that look down upon you from the deep untroubled vault of ether. If, we say, you have the faculty to interpret the meanings and receive the impressions of these glorious hills, the walk to “the Valleys” will be like a day spent over some thrilling narrative, or like the perusal of an epic. There will pass before you, in august procession, the lofty figures of heroes and martyrs.

Or, if you prefer it, you can proceed thither by train; but, in that case, you will want your talk with the hills; but, to make amends, you may be able to scrape acquaintance with some of the dwellers among these hills. You will find the railway station in the western quarter of Turin. Please step into the car. We shall not start till a

few minutes elapse; and you may pass the time in a survey of your companions—so novel in features, in manners, and attire, to one who has just crossed the Alps. Hard-favoured, yet kindly-looking men withal are they. There is no mistaking the dark eye and olive tint of Italy, but these true southern features are blended, in the instances before us, with the weather-beaten and toil-worn looks of the mountaineer. The Piedmontese are the Highlanders of Italy, and you must cross the Apennines before you can see the oval face and finely-moulded form so characteristic of that country. Homely in their attire are these men. Their beavers lie by their side, their coats of coarse woollen are on their arms, and, the weather being hot, their throats are disencumbered of napkin, and their open vest and shirt leave their nude busts displayed to the stomach-pits. The men before you are the cultivators and vine-dressers of the plain and the herdsmen of the hills.

Scarce less embrowned by the sun, and scarce less worn with toil, is the female face. It is plain that age steals fast upon it, and, like an untimely frost, nips it in its first fresh bloom, and trans-

forms it into ugliness. By short stages, indeed, does the Piedmontese maiden pass from the summer of her olive beauty to withered and wrinkled winter. Few, very few females of any rank do you meet in Italy to whom, without a violent effort, you can apply the compliment of the poet's line—

“Eve of the land that still is paradise.”

Despite the maxim that beauty when unadorned is adorned the most, one desiderates a little more tidiness of dress in these maidens and matrons. Where nature has lavished her charms but scantily art might do something to improve the person, by those little innocent contrivances which it knows so well how to employ, in order to set off the best points, and throw the bad ones discreetly into shade. Tidiness is within the reach of all: elegance is not, perhaps, in a country where the arts have returned to their infancy; and tidiness becomes a plain face better than finery. The common head-gear is still a kerchief, though occasionally a bonnet may be seen, with its trimming of ribbons. A blue cotton gown envelops the person, and the only thing like ornament indulged in is a printed napkin, of Manchester manufacture, adjusted on the shoulders, of particularly bright colours, though

not of particularly fine texture. Such are the companions of our ride.

It is rare that the Italian wraps himself up in his own thoughts. Whatever these thoughts, trivial or grave, he claims no monopoly of them—he freely admits all to a participation. Little groups of twos and threes are formed—a brisk conversation begins—how eloquent grow the hands! what a stream of emphatic gesture they emit! quick glances and significant shrugs help out the meaning, or intensify it—the dark eyes flash, the loud laugh rings, and even the rattle of the engine cannot drown the deep, full Italian voice. In this way the peasants discharge their pleasantries at one another, or on the objects that strike them by the way, discuss the news of home, the gossip of the neighbourhood, and, sometimes, the more general topics of the day—but all with good humour, temper, and gaiety. Happy natives of Piedmont! says the traveller who has just come from the south of Italy, and who has brought with him no very pleasant remembrances of clouded faces and bowed-down frames—of dejection and fear, deepening into a moody silence, unnatural to the buoyant and impulsive child of Italy—happy

natives of Piedmont, ye are free, and can fully express your thoughts, while your brother Roman is afraid of his own shadow, and dare not speak his mind, lest the person sitting by his side should prove a spy and denounce him.

An hour's ride sets you down at Pignerollo. Your run has been a pleasant one; now over green meadows, which some rill from the Alps keeps for ever fresh—now through fields of maize—now amidst stubble lands, where the ploughman and his steer are turning up the rich soil—now amid forests of apple trees, laden with golden fruit—and now amid rows of noble vines, which, leaning on the arms of the mulberry, and throwing wide their boughs over the field, suspend above it an azure ceiling, on which there falls from above a rich rain of sunlight, while beneath hang, in lovely profusion, the blood-red clusters. No cutting or tunnel intercepts, for even a moment, the view of the plain.

You are yet twelve miles from La Torre—the gate of the Valleys. You may take your seat in the diligence, or, if you have arrived early in the afternoon, and have yet a few hours of daylight, we would advise that you proceed thither on

foot. You will be amply recompensed for any little effort it may cost you. A nobler walk you nowhere will find. You will drink in beauty and grandeur at every step. How fresh the breezes!—they are redolent of liberty. How sublime the memories that hover round these summits!—they speak of heroes, and patriots, and martyrs. And what a majestic column is that right before you, which rises high above the intervening ridges, and towers to the height of upwards of twelve thousand feet, white with everlasting snows! Hail, Monte Viso! Thou eternal monument of the Vaudois land, hail! The column of Trajan is gray, the arch of Titus is nodding to its fall, the Pyramids are bowed down with the weight of two score centuries, but thou, noble pillar! growest not old—unchanged and erect thou seest the long centuries pass thee by, and, as new generations arise, they find thee wearing thy winter's garment of cloud, and thy summer's robe of glory, as of yore.

You pass along right in the face of the Vaudois hills—in fact, the road on which you are moving is a chord, the segment of the circle being the mountains. You have leisure to enjoy the scenery—to commune with it. Before you, and fixing



ever your gaze upon itself—the master glory of the scene—is the dazzling form of Monte Viso. On the left of you lies the plain of Piedmont, sleeping in a flood of light, and, by its deep majestic calm, presenting a striking contrast to the tumultuous forms and solemn shadows of the mountains which tower on your right. You get more familiar with them at every step. As you pass on, their glens open, and vistas of magnificence disclose themselves, of which as yet you can have only a momentary glimpse, but which provoke the wish that you had wings to fly thither. Flashing summits come suddenly into view, gaze down upon you for a moment, and withdraw. What did that great white mountain say? It seemed like a gray-haired prophet of the past whispering tales of other years. Yes, the fountains of memory are unlocked, and the heroic age of the Vaudois, with all its great heroes and its noble deeds, “unsung by poet, by senator unpraised,” but destined to live in the grateful remembrance of the wise and the good, when many achievements which make the world resound now shall be for ever forgotten, pass before the mind’s eye. The Seven Hills themselves, suggestive though they be of the golden city that

once crowned them, cannot so stir the soul as do these mountains.

To these mountains we now turn. Did you ever, reader, step right on from the garish piazza into the sombre shade of cathedral aisle? If so, were you not struck with the transition, so instantaneous, from the chatting, trafficking crowds, the rattling equipages, the harlequins, and the sun's fierce ray flung back in blinding radiance from burning pavement and blazing casement, to the calm, cool, dim temple, where, through the solemn twilight that filled aisle and roof, nought was heard but the organ's deep chant, and nought was seen but the dim gleam of picture or statue? Such is the transition we now make. We bid the garish plain, with its white towns and glancing spires, farewell, and we enter the sanctuary of the mountains. Ye solemn shadows, hail! Ye peaks that rise to heaven, untrdden by foot of man, welcome! Ye châteaux that look out so sweetly from your nests of verdure—ye frowning rocks—ye peaks that greet the morning—ye majestic pines—ye gleaming snows—ye herdsmen keeping your watch on the far-off pasture lands, all through the summer's day and star-lit night—ye mists that now veil, now

reveal, the glories amid which you move—ye clouds, now dark with thunder, now flaming in gold—ye rivulets, that sing with quiet gladness in the shade—ye cataracts, that leap, with shouting joy, from cliff to cliff—ye torrents, that send up to heaven in eternal thunder your hymns of praise, welcome all! welcome! welcome!

## CHAPTER IV.

### *Origin and Antiquity of the Waldenses.*

Whence are the Waldenses?—Can be traced down to A.D. 1100—Apostolic Church in Italy traced up to Ninth and Tenth Centuries—Apparent Break in the Historic Line—Probability that the Line runs on—Proofs of Antiquity of Waldenses—Their own Belief—Admission of Enemies, &c.—Cicero and Tomb of Archimedes—Which would Paul recognise, Rome or the Waldenses?

THERE awaits us on the threshold of the country of the Waldenses, to which we have now come, a short discussion touching the origin of this remarkable people.

Let us first premise that this small and heroic people bear different names in different countries. The Italians call them Valdesi; the French Vaudois. In Latin they are termed Vallenses or Valdenses, which the Germans and the English write Waldenses. In their own peculiar dialect they entitle themselves Vaudés; each and every of

which refers to their position, and means simply *Valley men*.

Were we to stumble upon a temple of pure Grecian architecture, in a land where the arts were unknown, we would naturally ask, "How came this temple here in the midst of these huts of savages? Who was its builder? And in what age was it erected?" Or were one to alight upon a plant, thousands and thousands of miles away from any known specimen of the same genus, and surrounded by plants of a totally different character, he would be very incurious indeed if he did not inquire, "Who carried thither the seed from which that plant has sprung, and when was it first dropped in the earth?"

It is the same marvel, but on a far greater scale, that meets us in the case of the Waldenses. In the midst of Europe we alight upon a handful of people totally dissimilar in their faith and their manner of worship from the nations around them. For hundreds of leagues on all sides of them, in France on the north, in Italy on the south, in Spain on the west, and Austria on the east, there reigns the rankest Popery—deep, unbroken night. Enter the Valleys of the Waldenses, you are amongst

a new people. In their sanctuaries no image was ever seen, in their valleys mass was never sung. Their knee was never bowed to the great Baal of modern Europe. In this little territory, walled around by "hills whose heads touch heaven," you behold a simple people worshipping God as the apostles and first Christians worshipped Him. We are constrained to ask, "Who are you, and whence came you?"

Some have taught that the Waldenses were not till the twelfth century, and that they are sprung from Peter Waldo, of Lyons. This opinion, though supported by some great names, has been too lightly adopted. Historical evidence exists which proves incontestably that the Waldenses of Piedmont existed before Peter Waldo arose, or his sect was known; nay, that a full half century before his birth they had a testimony formally pointed against all the leading errors of the Church of Rome. Peter Waldo may have got his name and opinions from the Waldenses, but certainly not the Waldenses from Peter Waldo.

The whole question touching the antiquity of the Waldensian Church may be narrowed to a single point, and can be very intelligibly stated. Starting

from the present hour, we can trace the existence of that Church down to the beginning of the twelfth century. The line runs on in blood—fearful persecutions, tremendous woes being the stepping-stones. Following these red prints, we are brought down to the year 1100, which is the date of the *Nobla Leyçon*, the Confession of Faith of the Waldensian Church. This remarkable document stands at the beginning of the modern history of this Church, like a great tower or pillar, proclaiming that the Waldensian Church then existed, that she existed separate from Rome, that she was a Church protesting against Rome, and holding the doctrines of the apostles. After that year the Waldensian Church passes for a while beyond our view; a cloud receives her out of our sight.

Let us now go back to the beginning of Christianity, and see how far upwards we can trace the primitive Apostolic Church. Well, then, we are informed, that in the days of Nero certain Christians in the Theban legion fled to the Alps from persecution. To what part of the Alps did they flee? To the valleys at the foot of Monte Viso, the very valleys known at this day as the Valleys of the Waldenses. In the third century we know

these valleys were the seat of a pure Christianity, for they had their martyrs, who bequeathed their names to the spots where they suffered, and these names these spots bear to this day. We may instance San Secundo and San Crisolo.

In the fourth century flourished Vigilantius, a famous opponent of image-worship and of all the superstitious practices of the time. The precise spot where Vigilantius lived is not determined, but it is universally conceded that it was in the north of Italy, and not far from the Cottian Alps, the same mountains which the Waldenses inhabit. This brings us, then, to the fourth century. The existence of a pure primitive Christianity in the north of Italy, for many succeeding centuries, is a fact well noted in history. The waters of error, issuing from Rome, overflowed Italy bit by bit, leaving uncovered the lower valleys of the Alps, and the great plains at their feet, for many centuries after the rest of Italy had been submerged. Numerous Churches, comparatively pure in doctrine, and tended by holy men, continued to flourish in Piedmont and Lombardy till the ninth and tenth centuries. "It was not till the eleventh century," says Dr M'Crie in his "Italy," "that the popes



succeeded in establishing their authority at Milan." In the beginning of the ninth century, Claude, the famous Archbishop of Turin, and many neighbouring bishops like-minded with Claude, continued nobly to resist the attempted usurpation of Rome, and to guard their flocks against the pestiferous errors and idolatrous practices by which she sought to overwhelm the gospel. These practices were denounced as innovations unknown to the Church, unknown to the apostles; and Rome, their author, was branded as beginning to kythe the arts of the harlot—the marks of Antichrist.

Thus have we brought down the history of the Church in the north of Italy to the beginning of the ninth century. Here the curtain falls; but mark, it does not fall on a Church at the point of death, but on a Church whose congregations ramified over Lombardy and Piedmont, and whose battle was still sustained by holy, faithful, and courageous bishops.

It is also material to observe, that when the curtain rises again, which it does some two centuries and a half after this, *i.e.* in the year 1100, it rises not on a young Church, with a few simple points of belief, but on a Church which even then bore

marks of age, inasmuch as it had an elaborate and fully formed creed—the “ Noble Lesson” to wit. A church that has a creed must have a history.

Such, then, are the two terminal points of the history of the Church of “ the Valleys”—the end of the eleventh century on the one side, and the beginning of the ninth century on the other. Between these two points is a chasm of some two centuries and a half, over which there is no very distinct bridge. Now, the question is simply this, Did the Church’s existence run on during these two centuries and a half, although, from the darkness of the times, we cannot trace it? or did the Church expire in the ninth century, and return to life again in the eleventh? There is not much room to hesitate here. The great preponderance of probability is, we think, on the side of the first alternative, even that the line of the Church’s existence runs on, though it passes for a while out of our view.

Our reasons for regarding this as by far the more probable supposition we shall state in a few sentences. Our first reason is the belief of the Waldenses themselves. They repeatedly, and in the most solemn circumstances, claimed the highest

antiquity for their Church. In their preface to the first French Bible, dated "The Alps, 17th February 1535," they give thanks to God, who, from the times of the apostles, or those of their immediate successors, had enriched them with the treasure of His gospel, which they had ever since continued to enjoy.

They never approached the throne of their native princes of the House of Savoy without reminding them that the faith professed in the Valleys had been handed down from father to son from time immemorial, even from the days of the apostles. We never read of the claim being challenged. Their claim of antiquity was believed by Beza and others among the Reformers. It was also tacitly admitted by their bitterest enemies, who spoke of them as the most dangerous of all heretics, because the most ancient. The famous inquisitor Reinerius, who wrote about 1250, states it as the tradition in his day, that this heretical sect "has lasted from the time of Sylvester, others from that of the apostles." Had this sect been then only an hundred and fifty years old, such a tradition could scarce have existed respecting it. We shall only further cite the testimony of *Borenco*, Prior of St

Roch, in Turin, about 1640. This person was requested to investigate the origin and antiquity of the Waldenses, and of course had access to all the Waldensian documents then in the Ducal archives. He was their bitter enemy, and may be presumed not to have made his report more favourable than he could help. Rorenco states that "they were not a new sect in the ninth and tenth centuries, and that Claude of Turin must have detached them from the Church in the ninth century." The testimony of friend and foe is alike favourable to the idea that the Waldensian Church is the venerable remnant of the primitive Church of Italy.

The supposition that this Church had its origin in the eleventh or twelfth century involves a miracle almost. How could a handful of peasants and shepherds, in the darkest period of Europe, and in the most secluded valleys of the Alps, without books, without intercourse with the world, have discovered the errors of Rome, and felt their way back to primitive doctrines and primitive practices? Churches do not spring from the earth full formed, they must grow. But when the Church of the Alps is seen at the beginning of the twelfth century, she is found to possess a perfect organisa-

tion and a perfect testimony—the “NOBLE LESSON,”—compelling the inference of a previous existence of some centuries.

The very obscurity that rests on its origin is confirmatory of the high antiquity of the Waldensian Church. Had the Waldenses arisen in the end of the eleventh century, their appearance would have caused so great a commotion, would have provoked such a thunderburst of excommunications on the part of Rome, that their rise would have been as distinctly and historically marked as that of Peter Waldo and his followers. The very persecutions endured by that Church attest its antiquity. Unless it had had centuries to root itself in the soil, it never could have withstood the violent storms with which it was assailed. The sapling would have gone down before these furious blasts. Moreover, it may be asked, why were their persecutors so intent on destroying every scrap of intelligence that might throw light on the previous history of the Waldenses? If these documents shewed that they were of recent origin, and had embraced novel opinions, we may be sure they would have been carefully preserved, and produced in confutation of their claims to an apostolic origin.

The very position of the Valleys is confirmatory of the idea of their early evangelisation. Lying on the great highway of early times across the Alps, they must have been often traversed by the first evangelists and pastors, as they passed to and fro betwixt the Churches of France and Italy. In fine, if we understand anything at all of the true meaning of the Apocalypse, we are sure of this, that it is there foretold that a small but competent number of witnesses should always be preserved on the Latin earth, testifying against the apostasy of the Latin Church. But if there was so considerable a period as two centuries and a half during which there was no Church, no witnesses on the earth—and if not in the Valleys, where else in Europe are we to look for them?—it will be hard to shew that the prophecy has been made good.

We infer, then, that the lamp of the Alps was kindled in primitive times, and has burned on and on to our day. What first brought it prominently into notice was the darkness; for so long as there was a considerable body of light both north and south of the Alps, it was natural that this lamp should pass without much observation. But when the darkness thickened—when it deepened into

midnight, which it did in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—then its rays began to attract the notice of its foes, and it comes into view in history by the very efforts which were then made to extinguish it. But that lamp is more ancient than the darkness. The gorgeous hierarchy and pompous ritual of Italy is the *new*, the simple worship of “the Valleys” is the *old*.

They tell of Cicero that when a young man he went to Sicily. “Where,” he asked at the magistrates, “is the tomb of Archimedes?” “The tomb of Archimedes,” they replied; “we did not know that he had a tomb.” “Oh yes,” said Cicero, “he had a tomb, and it must be hereabouts.” And setting to work, and clearing away the rubbish, they came upon a tomb of pure white marble, fresh as the day it was built, with the compass, the symbol of the philosopher’s favourite science, graven upon it. The tomb of Archimedes was before them.

When we go to Italy and ask, “Where is the primitive Church—the Church which Paul planted in this land, and which was renowned throughout the earth for its faith?” the Pope and the Cardinals reply, “There it is,” pointing to the Va-

tican. We examine narrowly; we look beneath the purple, and fine linen, and gold, for the marks of the Church primitive and apostolic: we read only the image and superscription of Cæsar. "No," we say, "this cannot be the primitive Church: that Church must be somewhere else." Following the indications of history, we leave the marble threshold of the Vatican, and turn to the Alps. "Here is a Church," we exclaim, "buried deep amid the shadows of the mountains, with an open Bible graven upon it as its symbol. *This* must be the Church primitive and apostolic."

But what a change! what a transformation! When Paul and the primitive fathers went to their rest, they left the Church on the banks of the Tiber; the twelfth century found her on the banks of the Angrogna. The first three centuries saw her seated amid the remains of the genius and art of classic antiquity; the middle ages beheld her dwelling amid the forests and glaciers of Monte Viso and the Sella Vecchia. And had Paul returned to the world, he would, without peradventure, have said, "This is the Church I planted; not this in the marble halls of the Vatican, but this amid the grassy slopes of the Pra del Tor: these are my



successors, not these mitred and purple-clad men, but these white-haired patriarchs and pastors, who here, in these mountain-engirdled valleys, feed their flocks by these waters which flow, not from the poisoned fount of tradition, but from the pure and eternal source of God's own Word."

## CHAPTER V.

*Ride from Genoa to La Torre.*

Beauty of the Apennines—Field of Marengo—The Po and its Moral—Mountain Costumes and Faces—Bricherasio—Liberty Costs High—A Second Thermopylæ—The Armour of the Waldenses—Entrance of the Valleys—A Monument not made with Hands—The Approach to La Torre—Sunset on the Vaudois Hills—A Former Visit—Changes since—Enter La Torre.

It was the 18th of August, and one of the most perfectly lovely afternoons of a lovely summer. The westering sun was projecting the purple shadows finely along the face of the Cottian Alps. I had had a long ride, for I had seen the sun rise in the morning from the blue bosom of the Mediterranean. Starting from Genoa by rail, there followed an hour or two's delightful winding through the glens of the Apennines. Oh, how exquisitely lovely are these hills, especially as they appeared on my ride southwards a fortnight before! Then

the rich purple of eve was upon them, and the radiance of the setting sun burned upon the forts that crown their summits, or was reflected in dazzling beams from the white villages that cluster thickly on their sides. The orange and the fig clothed their terraces, and the vine was hanging her not yet ripened clusters around their crags and jutting rocks. But now the broad daylight, though it left their forms as exquisitely romantic as ever, revealed the havoc which the unusually great heats of the summer had wrought in their covering. Their verdure was gone—utterly burned up. Not a pile of grass was to be seen. The beds of great rivers were dry; the thirsty sun had completely drunk up their floods. The mountains were seamed with the courses of winter-torrents, in which not a particle of water was to be seen. All the humbler flowers were dead. The larger shrubs and trees only were able to maintain the struggle against the common foe, which threatened extinction to the whole vegetable race. Even the fig-tree hung down her broad leaves, and the silvery olive bowed beneath a yoke as intolerable almost as that which weighs upon the children of the land.

Emerging from the narrow glens, and the long

dark tunnels of the Apennines, the high Alps—"Italia's snowy ridge"—unveiled themselves. How proudly that great white wall stood up along the northern edge of the vast plain of Piedmont! The mountains looked so near that they seemed to hang their glaciers right over the bloody field of Marengo, yet they could not be less than a full hundred miles off. We crossed that famous field, and heard only the snortings of our engine where the cannon once roared, and saw the vine ripening her clusters in the sun's clear light where carnage had piled her gory heaps beneath the black cloud of war.

After a short halt beneath the ramparts of Alessandria, we resumed our way, steering right upon the great white hills before us. We left numerous villages and not a few towns behind us. They seemed enjoying their noonday siesta, after the fashion of their country, and lay lazily on the plain, basking in the sunbeams. We travelled many a league northwards. Still we came not at the white hills. At last we crossed the Po, which we found rolling its floods between banks which the sun had somewhat straitened, scarcely justifying the boast of a native poet, Fulvio Testi—

“ The Po completes his way, that river king;  
 While on his placid breast  
 The lofty vessel daily spreads her wing,  
 Nor blaze of summer heat has force  
 His bank to straiten, or retard his course.”

But if the shrunken stream of the Po falsified the boast of the poet, it gave emphasis certainly to the warning he addressed to Count Raymond Montecuccoli, and to all tyrants, that Time's scorching beam would yet drink the “swelling wave” and dry the “proud stream” of their power. Nay, not little tyrants only, like Count Raymond, but great ones, like the Papacy—the very Po of Italian despotisms—which only a few centuries ago descended on Europe as descends the Po from the Alps, full, resistless, and apparently inexhaustible, now hold on their way with abated force and shrunken flood, like the river over which I was now riding. For, as the same poet sings—

“ Skies have their changes, and the year comes round,  
 Your flood will soon abate,  
 And only parch'd and naked sands be found;  
 Where, on no distant day, I yet  
 Expect to cross you with my feet unwet.”

Passing through a trellis-work of vines, interspersed with the belladonna and other flowering shrubs, we drew up in the station at Turin.

After a halt of an hour in the lovely capital of Piedmont, I passed westward to Pignerollo by rail. What a change in the company that now filled the cars! Those who had come with me from Genoa were of the city, and bore about them the unmistakeable marks of that polite elegance and fashionable gaiety that still flourish in the residence of the Dorias. Those now around me were of the mountains. They were hard-featured men, homely in dress, and as homely in manners as the buoyant, versatile, and dramatic Italian can well be. In the younger females I remarked a freshness, and even floridness of complexion, which is never seen among the deeply-tinted and embrowned peasants of the Apennines and the Mediterranean coast—a circumstance owing, doubtless, to the cooler climate of the Alps, and the somewhat greater amount of water held in solution by their air. But amends was made for the rougher visage and the homelier attire of my companions by the frank smiles and kindly looks that the face wore in many instances, and which seemed to say that there beat a bold honest heart underneath.

On a former visit I had gone on foot the distance betwixt Pignerollo and La Torre. This time, as

I wished to see some friends in the Valleys in the evening, and arrange for the excursion of the following day, I resolved to proceed by *diligence*. The vehicle that runs betwixt Pignerollo and La Torre is not the most capacious of conveyances, and so the less chance of having one's choice of a seat, but I was fortunate enough to secure a place in my favourite *banquette*. The afternoon, as I have said, was warm and bright, and willingly we gave ourselves to the long avenue that runs on to Bricherasio, beneath a continuous shading of walnut trees, catching, as we rode along, on this hand glimpses of the winding Clusone, now bursting into light, now hiding in the goodly fruitage of the plain; and on that, through the openings of the walnut trees, glimpses of the mountains, here shady with pine forests, there gleaming with snows;—the appearance of the whole justifying the eulogium which the poet Thomson has pronounced on this part of Italy,

“ Where the Lombard plain,  
In spite of culture negligent and gross,  
From her deep bosom pours unbidden joys,  
And green o'er all the land a garden spreads.”

We drew up at the village of Bricherasio, and I had the mortification to see, perched on the front

of the *diligence* that there met us on its way to Pignerollo, the moderator of the Vaudois Church, Pasteur Malan, whom I had expected to meet that evening in his own dwelling at La Torre. There was but a feeble stir in the little town, and what stir there was seemed to be maintained mainly by its two cafés, whither, as eventide draws on, all the loungers and idlers of the place, in fact all of the population that can get away, merchants, priests, and the soldiers of the Corpo di Guardia, direct their steps as by one consent. The attractions are wine, coffee, cards, and the Piedmontese journals.

The shadow of Monte Viso was getting perceptibly longer on the masses of rock and mountain around him. More palpably marked were growing the glens and clefts in the Vaudois hills on the right. Behind us a ruddy light was beginning to burn on the towering crest of the craggy escarped mountain that leans over Pignerollo. The great clock in the cathedral spire struck five. The next moment the little square rung to the postilion's whip. In less than two minutes we reached the little rivulet that forms the boundary of the Popish district of Bricherasio. We crossed it, and were on Waldensian soil—now the freest spot in all



free Piedmont! but of that freedom well may the Vaudois say, as said the centurion, "With a great sum obtained I it."

Well! the price of liberty in all ages has been high, and it is well to ponder the fact before going to market to buy it. There have been nations which have sold their liberty on terms amazingly low, but we know of none that ever yet bought it back but at a great cost—a very great cost. What they bartered away for a little gold, or a little base ease, they had to buy back with the precious blood. Yes, none can be free that dare not to die!

But the front of the Pignerollo diligence and the little town of Bricherasio is a strange place for such a homily! Nay, not so unsuitable after all; for we are now on Waldensian soil. We tread a second Thermopylæ—a Thermopylæ where burned a purer patriotism and glowed a higher courage than even on the first. On the strand we have now touched, the despotic and destructive principle, having overflowed all Europe besides, was met, and confronted, and beaten back, and the sacred principle of true liberty preserved and handed down to modern times. Before this august battlefield Blenheim and Waterloo pale their glories.

And by whom was this struggle—a struggle of many centuries together—for freedom of conscience maintained? By peasants and herdsmen! But they were fired by fine classic models, doubtless? Their indignation and patriotism were drawn out by the appeals of eloquence? They were amply furnished with all the munitions and appliances of war? How otherwise could they have discomfited such odds? None of these things had the Vaudois. The echoes of their hills no poet ever awoke with his lyre. No orator ever shook them with his thunder. They donned no coat of mail, no helmet of steel, when they went forth to battle. To a world in arms they opposed only their naked breasts. But within these breasts beat hearts enlarged to superhuman daring by the teachings of the Bible; and in this armour alone they withstood the embattled shock of raging myriads, and flung them back, a torn and routed wreck, as do their mountains the rain and hail which the winds of heaven dash against their sides. “The Lord, mighty in battle,” gave power to these herdsmen and peasants.

We were rounding the long low hill on the slope of which Bricherasio is situated. That hill,

rough and bristling with trees and rocks, is drawn along in front of "the Valleys," which it divides from the plain of Piedmont, as if put here of purpose to be an impediment in the way of any hostile force that might seek the dwellings of the Waldenses. It is in fact an advanced dyke to the great citadel that towers behind it. Between the termination of this hill and the spurs of Monte Viso on the west is a long level avenue, which contracts as we advance, and is our only path of approach. We now turn our face towards the mountains. They look so near to you that you almost think that you could touch them with the hand; yet are they full five miles off.

You see that gap right before you in the mountains? That is the door of the Waldensian territory—the entrance of the Valley of Luserna. Before it is hung a veil of sunshine and shadows, which hides in part, and in part displays, the glories over which it is drawn. Shining through the thin bluish mist you can see the sheen of white spires, the forms of great hills, and the gleam of far-off snows. You feel that now you are entering "the Valleys." But lo! what mighty object is this, which stands close by the entrance of the

Valley of Luserna? It shoots up an unbroken shaft or column of stone, from the plain to the clouds, finely rounded off, as if hewn by chisel. This is the famous Castelluzzo. Even here, in the midst of the most majestic objects, it rivets the eye and gives character to the scene. Who set up that pillar at the entrance of the Vaudois land? Who bade it stand here, a memorial of past events performed in this field of wonders—this theatre of “the wars of the Lord?” No human hand up-reared that pillar of stone. He that planteth the heavens and formeth the mountains was its builder. He it was who sank its foundations deep in earth, and uplifted its mighty top above the clouds, and scooped out, within its ribs of stone, a friendly chamber to which the persecuted children of the Valleys might flee. Majestic monument! kindly didst thou shelter the hunted Vaudois in evil days. Thou didst take them to thy bosom, and didst cover them with thy mantle of mountain mist from the pursuit of their foes; and now, though dead, thou dost faithfully stand by their ashes, and tellest to every passer-by the heroic story of their sufferings, and the sad tale of their enemies’ cruelties and crimes.

It was now betwixt five and six. The *diligence* crept along at a pace that would have been intolerable at home, but here, amid the sublimities of nature and the associations of ages, I felt no disposition to quarrel with the rate of speed. The road, straight as the arrow's course, ran on, mile after mile, till it seemed in the distance to grow to a line as fine as the thread of the gossamer. It led the eye along to the mountains, which it seemed not only to touch, but to perforate. The path was bordered with grass, gemmed with wild flowers. Bright they were, and happy as flowers may be in the golden light. Here the vine ran off in the most lovely festoonings, and there green meadows were spread out deliciously fresh, as well they might, for all day long they drank the crystal waters of the Alps. How grateful to the eye!—to mine especially, who had just come from the coasts of the Mediterranean, where the excessive heats of summer had burned up the grass, where the Apennines were brown as if fire had passed over them, and where the very soil was so dried that it seemed ready to burst into a blaze, should but a spark fall upon it.

Along the road, on either side, stood a row of

noble trees, of various species. There was the lovely acacia; there was the willow, with its long tresses falling about it, in a shower of beauty; there, too, was the walnut; and there stood the chestnut, bearing up with patient and bounteous strength its great burden of nuts, waiting till autumn should ripen them, that it might rain food by the hundred-weight upon the Vaudois. These nuts make a wholesome repast, and are much prized.

But the glory of the scene lay in its mountains. Every few yards of the road presented them under new arrangements, and added new elements of sublimity to the scene. How rich their colourings! How exquisitely lovely their hues! And what a variety of strongly contrasted tints, from the crimson and gold of this summit, to the dark purple of that! On the right were the heights of San Giovanni and Prarustino full in the sunlight. On the left were the rolling mountainous masses that engirdle the foot of Monte Viso. They wore a deep ethereal hue, with a luminous belt along their ridges, like the dawnings of a hidden glory that was about to burst out from behind them. Above them, sublime in the firmament, rose the dark

pyramidal summits of Monte Friolante. The monarch of the group, Monte Viso, was here invisible, being hidden in the shadow of the lesser, but more obtrusive heights near us. Right before us, in the centre of the picture, rose the tall pillar-like Castelluzzo, and behind it the huge mass of Mont Vandalin. Farther off, and more to the left, was the craggy and cliff-like rampart, buttressed with peaks, that shuts in the Valley of Luserna at its further extremity.

Overhead was a balmy sky, wearing that deep spiritual tint which Italy only can shew. The sun was a full hour from his setting. He had looked down upon many lands, and gladdened nations not a few since he rose; yet now, when about to finish his course, and sink behind the hills of the Vaudois, he was as redolent of strength and glory as when I had seen him in the morning emerge from the classic waters of the Mediterranean, rejoicing as a strong man to run his race. He paused above the mighty rampart beneath him, as if he delighted to view the scene of magnificence which he had so large a share in creating. Nor was it on the hills only that his beams fell with so transforming a glory. Behind me, white towns

by hundreds lit their glories amid the green luxuriance of the valley of the Po. A few golden cloudlets were sailing along the sky, with slow and stately motion, looking like the chariots of ransomed spirits who had come down at this delicious hour to survey from the topmost battlements of earth the former scene of their toils and achievements.

I could not help recalling the very different circumstances in which, six years before, I had approached this same region. I had come two months later in the season, and just in time to see the commencement of the rainy season in the mountains. Well do I remember that the vine was gathered, and that its leaves, touched by the early frosts, were passing into a bright crimson; that the chestnut had ripened, and was dropping its nuts; that the fields were bare, as bare at least as the almost continual summer of the north of Italy would permit; that the winds, as they blew from the Mediterranean, came heavily laden with vapour, which was accumulating in ominous masses around the mountain tops; and that, for the six or seven following days of my sojourn, the mist never left the hills, and torrents of rain continued to pour down



almost without intermission, swelling the rivulets into torrents, the torrents into rivers, and the rivers into tumultuous floods, which, rolling to the plain, converted meadow and vineyard into turbid lakes. All the glories that greeted me now, the sparkling mead, the azure mountain, the golden peak, were then obscured by a troubled sky, or wholly swallowed up in the ocean of vapour that had gathered round the hills.

Six years! And was it so long since I last stood within the shadow of these hills! When I saw them again raising their mighty forms in the silent sky, majestic and unchanged as when I bade them adieu, I felt as if that adieu had been spoken but yesterday. With them, changes there had been none; with me, alas! how many! I had seen a fellow-labourer struck down by my side, and the echoes of his fall had come back from the extremities of the civilised earth. I had laid in the dust the head of him from whom I drew my own being. Other friends, unknown to fame, yet dearly beloved, and with whom were linked the remembrances of youth's hopes and of manhood's toils, had passed away. I could say, in the simple yet touching words of Wordsworth,—

“ Like clouds that rake the mountain summit,  
Or waves that own no curbing hand,  
How fast has brother followed brother,  
From sunshine to the sunless land ! ”

Or rather, let me say, to that land where “ the sun shall no more go down.”

But why dwell on these? Time digs his graves, and the mighty lie down in them. Genius is a star that sets even while you gaze; love a flower that withers while you admire it. Frail man! to what shall I liken your glory? It is like the morning mist on that plain behind me. It is like the golden cloud that floats above these mountains, and which waits but for the sun to withdraw to vanish for ever. But ye hills, how stable are ye! Ye rivers, ye roll eternally in your courses! Man's existence is a summer's brook, whose waters flow swiftly past, and fail for evermore. But ye mountains, ye are everlasting: what ye were at creation's dawn, ye are now; and what ye are now, the archangel's trump will find you! But, no! ye are the mortal, man is the immortal. The same trump that will dig your grave will open his; and long after your knell has been rung, he will find himself the inheritor of ages, whose long cycle, rolling on and on, and never reaching its end, will make

your years, vast as they now seem, to be remembered but as a brief and passing day.

We were now entering the village. Little, quiet, secluded, picturesque La Torre, with thy tall houses, broad eaves, narrow stone-paved street, and white spires, nestling under thine own Castelluzzo, with holy and spirit-stirring memories clustering thick about thee, like the evening shadows of thine own Alps, welcome, welcome! We had passed the opening of the Val d'Angrogna; pleasant it was, and sweet the murmur of its torrent as it rose in the calm evening air, and mingled with the tinkle of the bells of the few cows and sheep that were being driven in from pasture. There were groups of children at play on the street as we passed on; and with the native population of the place there mingled a few strangers—travellers like myself. Descending from the *diligence* I presented myself in the Hotel L'Ours. The kind Vaudois landlady conducted me up stairs, along the balcony that commands the valley of the Pelice, and ushered me into the very chamber I had occupied six years before.

Among the Vaudois I had found a second home—another native land. I experienced not here that

vague sense of dread which always pressed upon me when wandering alone in the strange cities of France and Italy. I felt here among a people whose hearts I knew. They were my kinsmen in a sort, and trustfully I gave myself to sleep within the friendly shadows of their hills.

## CHAPTER VI

## Valley of Angrogna.

The Weather—Arrangement of Valleys—Plan of Tour—Angrogna—Antiquity—Entrance—Torrent—Fruitage—Elysian-looking Châlets—San Lorenzo—Last Look of Luserna—Innocent III. and First Persecutions of the Waldenses—Innocent VIII. and Crusade of 1487—Opening of Gorge—Strength of Hills—Population—La Serre—First post-Reformation Temple—Synod at Champforans in 1532—Beza—Spot where Synod sat described.

THE morning opened with a promise of the continuance of fair weather. In the south and east there was a fine mottling of marble clouds, which stretched away over the plain of Piedmont. A soft fleecy mist would at times look over the brow of the dark hill on the other side of the Pelice, as if it wished to see what was doing among the chestnut woods on its sides. Cloudless rose the top of the Castelluzzo, but a mass of black vapour clung somewhat tenaciously to the higher ridge of the Vandalin, as if just to hint the possibility of a change.

But the best sign of all was a large space of blue sky in the north, through which the sunbeams, dammed up in other quarters, were pouring down in a flood of glory, which made the gigantic cliffs that rise behind Bobbio, and close in the Valley of Luserna, look like a wall of gold. This survey of things helped my appetite amazingly, and I descended to make—the best of all preparations for a day's hard work on foot—a good breakfast.

My plan of operations was already formed. I shall detail it in intelligible terms. Suppose, reader, you are standing at La Torre, with your face towards the Alps, running right out before you is the Valley of Luserna—the great trunk valley, we may call it. It is a grassy strath, with a wall of rock on either hand climbing to the clouds, and gigantic doors of rock closing it at its further extremity. On your right hand is the Valley of Angrogna, and on the left is the Valley of Rora. These three valleys spread out like the spokes of a wheel, the spot on which you stand being the nave. Of course they are divided, the one from the other, by lines of mountains, with châteaux and chestnut trees climbing up their sides, and hanging on to almost their naked ridges.

Beyond the mountains which shut in the three valleys just named, lie the valleys of Prali, Rodoretto, San Martino, and Perosa, forming, as it were, the rim of the wheel. If you go round that rim, you fall in again at the entrance of Luserna. Thus the Waldensian territory is what in Scotland would be called "self-contained." It is shut in on all sides by a wall "exceeding great and high," and rising up to heaven. It has but one gate properly—the Valley of Luserna; and even that is strongly barricaded by the heights of Prarustino and San Giovanni, which lie along in front of the entrance of Luserna. These are the outworks of this great citadel.

Each valley is a fortress in itself. It has its own wall of defence, and its gate of ingress. It has within numerous places of defence and of retreat, and labyrinths and surprises, so admirably planned that the highest engineering skill in the world could not have better adapted them to their end. And while it is the fact that these valleys form a congeries of fortresses, it is also a remarkable fact that they are so connected together, and so open into one another, that, taking them as a whole, they form one fortress of mighty and match-

less strength. Though you should combine all the forts and citadels that cover Europe into one enormous fortress, it would, in comparison, be but as the pigmy buildings of a Lilliputia to the iron strength of a Sebastopol or a Gibraltar. "The Eternal, our God," says Leger, "having destined this land to be the theatre of His marvels, and the bulwark of His ark, has, by natural means, most marvellously fortified it." He that "built His sanctuary like high palaces, like the earth which He hath established for ever," built the citadel of the Vaudois. He laid deep its foundations—He raised high its towers. He made strong its gates and bars. He stored it with corn and wine and oil, and, kindling the lamp of truth within it, He bade the Vaudois be strong, and defend their mountain citadel against the world.

The arrangement of the Valleys being such as I have now described, my journey may be said to have arranged itself. It was obvious that I must make La Torre my head-quarters, and take those valleys that stretched out from it as from a centre (the spokes of the wheel) first, and those that lay on the circumference (the rim of the wheel) next. The nearer valleys I could take at the rate



of one a-day, returning at night to my hotel—visiting a second time any valley which I might wish more minutely to explore. As regarded the valleys more remote, I needs must cross the mountains in order to see them. Descending from the Col Julien, I could traverse first the Valley of Prali, then pass on to San Martino and Perosa, and, coming round by Prarustino, make my descent again upon La Torre. This plan offered to economise time and labour, and yet to admit of a very complete survey of the Waldensian territory.

I had seen a few friends in the evening, after my arrival. I call them friends, though I had never seen them till then, and was under the necessity of introducing myself. M. Malan, the moderator, whom I had met on my former visit, had gone, as I have already said, that evening to Turin. Dr Revel, the ex-moderator, whose acquaintance I had had the happiness of making in Scotland, was absent at Nice, doing duty for M. Pilatte, then on his mission to Britain. Dr Revel, however, was expected from one day to another. But I saw Professors Revel and Monastier, and some others, who all gave me a cordial welcome to the Valleys. I submitted my plan to them, and they were

pleased to approve of it, and kindly to furnish me with maps to facilitate my survey of their valleys.

I resolved to begin with ANGROGNA. It is the most ancient of "the Valleys." It is the holy place of the Waldensian sanctuary. When the first dim light of history falls upon that land, it is the Valley of Angrogna that comes into view, with the venerable Barbes in the Pra del Tor, watching by their lamp all through the night of Christendom, and feeding it with heavenly oil. In the Pra was the school of the prophets, whence young missionaries well instructed in the Holy Scriptures went forth into the dark places of Europe, to kindle in other lands the light that burned so purely within the deep recesses of Angrogna.

The valleys of Luserna and Angrogna meet a few paces below La Torre. That town stands on the angle formed by their junction. Consequently I had passed and repassed many times the entrance of Angrogna during my former sojourn in the Valleys. Never did devotee more long to draw aside the veil and gaze on the hidden wonders of some interdicted temple than I did to enter the Valley of Angrogna, and gaze on the ancient Pra del Tor. But the mists that day after day continued to en-

shroud it, the thunders which from time to time were heard bellowing through its depths, and the red swollen torrent that came rolling down from its higher reaches, told me that, meanwhile, admittance there was none. It reminded me of the temple in the Apocalypse, which "was filled with smoke," so that "no man was able to enter into the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." But the gates barred with storm then stood open now.

I returned on the path by which I had entered La Torre the previous evening. I crossed the bridge that spans the Angrogna—the torrent that gives its name to the valley; its pellucid waters flowed along on a bed of pebbles, beautifully white, but the heat had drunk its stream, and its banks were now all too large. A little below the bridge, on the other side of a shady thicket of acacias and walnuts, it joins the Pelice, in whose company it travels on to the Po. This stream was to be my companion all the way to the Pra del Tor.

I turned to the left, and proceeded up the valley. Its entrance was fresh and soft as the softest meadow in all England. The path that seduced Christian and Hopeful from the highway, and landed

them in Doubting Castle, was not sweeter than that which I was here treading, nor the stream that bordered it more pleasant than the torrent that murmured on my left—no augury, I trusted, that I should find some grim Giant Despair sitting amid the ruins of the Pra del Tor.

I passed on. Noble trees gave their shade. On either hand glittered the bright meadows, on which a few peasants were busy with the scythe, while others, on the ploughed land a little further off, were spreading out manure, preparatory to another crop. The vine was hanging her clusters above their heads; for here the earth, in many places, pours forth at once corn and wine. At about a half-mile's distance before me was a low hill, which, like a screen, shut out the further view of the Val d'Angrogna. It had a belt of vineyards at its bottom, and clumps of chestnuts, and other woods, with a sprinkling of chalets, on its top.

The path rises higher and higher above the torrent at every step, offering some fine views of the Valley of Luserna beneath, which is getting more and more gorge-like, with its carpet of bright meadows, and its wall of great Alps. The road gets rougher, the ascent grows steeper; farewell

the level lawns and the bright air—we climb to where branching trees and overhanging cliffs fill the valley with dark shadows. We pause in the middle of the ascent, and laying our sheet of paper on this flat mica slate stone that tops the low dyke that runs along the path, we take a few notes.

Beneath us is the ravine of the Angrogna. The dash of the torrent comes faintly on the ear. We note the depth of the valley by marking how narrow a streamlet the river now looks, and to what a pigmy size the herds and peasants in its meadows have now dwindled. But mark the mountain across the stream: what a gorgeous commingling of fruitage and habitations! Chestnut and mulberry woods cover its ample sides. Here they are gathered in clumps, there they run along in belts, and fence off luxuriant pasture-grounds, or hanging terraces, sown with wheat or planted with vines. At little distances apart, all over the mountain, châteaux peer out; their low brown roofs, and broad overlapping eaves, forming a striking contrast to the deep green foliage that surrounds them. Sometimes they crowd together, and form a small village; at other times they stand apart and singly, with a few mantling vines, and a little orchard or

bit of lawn in front, on which the shadows play. It is hardly possible for the imagination to picture anything more truly elysian than these cottages, judged of by their exterior. From the meadows below, where the verdure and flowers of summer are rarely absent, to where the bare rock crowns the summit, and winter holds undivided empire, these dwellings, so redolent of tranquillity and beauty, are seen rising all up the mountain. We think of the golden age, and begin to fancy that we are treading a region where the primeval curse of barrenness and toil has not yet intruded.

But, ah! there is no such region; and well, perhaps, is it that the earth should not be richer in fruits till man's nature shall have become richer in virtue. Fullness of bread and abundance of idleness was the ruin of her that now lies beneath the dark asphaltic wave; and had man but to hold out his cup to Nature to have it filled with corn and wine, what would he become? A glutton, a slave, a savage. Wholesome medicine to the heart are the big drops from the brow; and many a big drop from the brow of Vaudois moistens that soil which you see so rich in fruitage. Men of toil, of hard toil, are the occupiers of these châteaux. But

why speak of toil? Worse visitants than toil have the Valleys seen. The dark fiend-like form of bigotry has here intruded many times and oft, and that hill-side has been ravaged with fire and sword; that stream has run red with blood; and these hills and glens have re-echoed, not as now the torrent's dash and the herdsman's song, but the piteous piercing cry of slaughtered Vaudois.

Climbing the heights I came, in about an hour and a half from starting, to the village of San Lorenzo. It is finely placed on the summit of the pass leading over the hill that hides from the spectator, in the Valley of the Pelice, the more romantic part of the Val d'Angrogna. It is a mountain hamlet of some dozen or so of houses. They cluster on the hill-side without much attention to order, and their sanitary arrangements are anything but satisfactory; but doubtless amends is made by the mountain breezes, which are never wanting, and the mountain deluges, which will sometimes clear away in hours the accumulations of weeks. To tell the truth, one coming direct from Britain is affected somewhat unpleasantly by a near approach to these elysian-looking abodes, and wishes that he always had, as we had a few

minutes ago, a ravine and stream between himself and them, so that the poetry might not suffer. As for myself, I had come from the Apennines, and so could apply an Italian standard; and judged by that standard, the Vandois homes are distinguished for their cleanliness. Still, I must say, considering the great facilities for adornment here within reach, these châteaux are not what they might be. One could wish to see more frequently flowers tended by man growing near them, and breathing their perfume at window and door. The beauty of these châteaux is very much that of nature—the climbing vine, the o'erarching chestnut, and the bright fresh grass of the mountain. Give an Englishman one of these nooks, with the air, the sun, the waters, and the wild flowers of these hills, and what a lovely home he would soon create for himself!

How often have the weary feet of Vandois climbed this height, dragging up yet wearier hearts! How often, from this spot, have mournful looks been cast behind on the vale below, reddened with slaughter, or darkened with the smoke of burning dwellings! But better times have come round; and it was sweet to find the labours



and songs of peace proceeding where the tempests of war had so often and so fiercely raged. The grain harvest was already reaped, and the crop was being thrashed out, and I had an opportunity at this village of seeing how this operation is conducted in the Valleys. A yard or floor is prepared before the peasant's door, and on that floor some forty or fifty sheaves are thrown down, while half a dozen peasants march backwards and forwards upon them, beating them all the while with very light flails. Thus the grain is thrashed out. You pause to survey the operation, and the well-bred and kindly peasants doff their caps, and wish you good morning.

At San Lorenzo we bid farewell to the Valley of Luserna below us. Its meadows and white chalets are now lost to the view, and so, too, is that noble panorama of hills beyond it. The white clouds are coming and going amid their summits, and playing strange freaks with them. This moment there is nothing but vapour rolling about, its edges glistening as they turn to the sun. You look again, and there stands before you, proudly erect in heaven, the sublime form of some mighty Alp. You look again, it is gone; and while the

eye vainly pursues it through the mist, there flashes upon you, in another quarter of the sky, a yet mightier peak. But a moment, and the envious mist summons it too away, and there opens, mayhap, a far retreating gorge, with its forests, its rocks, and its foaming torrents, up which the eye travels to where distant peaks shut it in. The mountains come and go, stand up stable and enduring in the sky, or vanish as smoke, just as the mist wills. They seem the sport of a thing which itself is the sport of the winds. How like the world's stage, where great men tower high and bulk large this hour, and are gone the next! Over the panorama of life, as over the panorama of the mountains, broods fitful, capricious, sudden change. These hills which the mist is playing with, and to which we now bid a short adieu for the shadows of Angrogna, are but the footsteps of Monte Viso. The giant comes not forth for the day: he curtains his sublime head within a pavilion of cloud. But it is time we should now speak of some of the wonderful events of which the Valley of Angrogna has been the scene.

It is wonderful how the Waldenses were preserved till towards the Reformation, when the testimony

which they had maintained all through many dark centuries was to be taken up by a larger and stronger body of witnesses. One of the first to launch against them the thunders of excommunication was Innocent III., in the end of the twelfth century. Innocent III. may be styled the model pontiff. He was a pope after Satan's own heart. Shunning the gross beastly vice of Borgia, and the simpering pietism of Pio Nono, he displayed an astute pride, a deep craft, and a cool determination of purpose which even Lucifer himself might have envied. Innocent solemnly devoted the Waldenses, as the enemies of God, to fire and sword in this life, and to eternal torments in the next. There was scarce a pontificate after Innocent's in which the same fearful sentence was not pronounced against the Waldenses. Nevertheless, for some time, the papal thunder rolled harmlessly over the Valleys. The princes of Europe were either at enmity among themselves, or were too much engrossed with their own special objects, to have leisure or inclination to execute the behests of the Vatican. Yet though the Waldenses, as a race, were marvellously shielded, and though their mountain home remained uninvaded till within a

century or so of the Reformation, individuals of their nation and faith, spread over all the other countries of Europe, were all the while, even from the days of Innocent, and before his time, suffering death in the dungeon, at the stake, and by the cord. But the fifteenth century approached, ushering in an era of martyrdom. These three centuries—the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth—witnessed the world's greatest battle. Never again, in all time, can there be seen a contest so prolonged, so desperate, and with odds so tremendous, as that which was waged betwixt error, then at the strongest, and truth, then at the weakest, during these three dismal centuries. That was the hour and power of darkness.

We pass over the tragedy of Christmas-day 1400. The catastrophe was a great one, though the memory of it has been somewhat obliterated by the many greater that have followed since. Yet for centuries after, in the Valley of Pragela, the father was wont to tell to the son how their ancestors were compelled to flee to the Albergian Alp, and how mother and infant met, amid the snows and frosts of the mountain, the death from which they fled when menaced with it by the sword of the persecutor.

It was now the year 1487. A great blow was meditated. Again the papal thunders rolled, launched this time from the hands of Innocent VIII. The bull, as all such documents have done, vented itself in terms as holy and meek as its spirit was inexorably savage and cruel. It denounced the Waldenses as execrable heretics, whom it was necessary, for the glory of God, and the weal of those sheep whom they were seducing, to slay, burn, and utterly destroy. Albert Cataneo, Archdeacon of Cremona, was appointed papal legate, with power to carry out the bull; and the more effectually to enable him to do so, all Christian kings, and especially those of France and Savoy, were required to assist him with their arms. The combined French and Piedmontese host amounted to 18,000 men. In the rear of this army came a motley crowd of adventurers, cut-throats, pillagers, and vagabonds of every class, whom hatred of the persons of the Vaudois, and perhaps the yet stronger passion of the love of their goods, had attracted from all Italy to aid in this pious enterprise. This host was precipitated like an avalanche upon the vine-dressers and shepherds of the Valleys.

Cataneo and his worthy following was met by

two of the gravest of the Waldensian patriarchs. They reminded the papal legate that they were the servants of the living God, that they were living peaceably in the inheritance of their fathers, and bade him beware what he did, for they trusted in One who could, by a single blow, annihilate his great army. The peace for which the deputies so meekly sued was denied with arrogant scorn, but their words fell not to the ground.

The infatuation and rashness with which Cataneo's pride filled his heart brought ruin on himself and his army. Meditating a blow that should extinguish at once the whole Waldensian nation, he extended his line so as to enclose their whole territory. The Waldenses retreated into their mountains, and were followed by the soldiers. Few ever returned. They were drawn into ambuscades, they were led weary chases from mountain to valley, and from valley to mountain. They were met in narrow defiles, and slaughtered in hundreds; avalanches of rocks were rolled down upon them, which gave them at once death and burial. Flying parties of Waldenses would sally suddenly forth from the mist, attack and discomfit their enemies, and as suddenly retreat. The sol-

diers knew not when or where they would be assailed, and thus it came to pass, in the words of Muston, that "that great host disappeared from the Vaudois mountains as rain from the sands of the desert."

But this campaign, like all that followed, was rife with incidents in which none could but see the finger of God. Often a very trifle would turn the fortune of the day, and give to the Waldenses a victory as sudden and unexpected as it was complete and glorious. Of these occurrences, not the result of chance, but the doing of God, let us instance the following. The story comes well here, for we are now on the very spot where it took place.

One division of this great host lay encamped at San Giovanni, and were attempting to force an entrance into the Valley of Angrogna. Swarming up the acclivities we have just traversed were the soldiers of the papal legate, their pikes and steel cuirasses glittering in the sun. Posted along the height we have just reached, were the fighting men of the Waldenses; the bow their only weapon; while bucklers of skin, covered with the bark of the chestnut tree, protect their bodies. Behind them, sheltered by the heights on which

their husbands, fathers, and brothers are stationed, are their wives and little ones. The soldiers of Cataneo, letting fly showers of arrows, press up the ascent, and the Vaudois seem about to give way. Those behind, seeing, as they believed, their brave defenders on the point of being overcome, fell on their knees, and extending their hands to heaven, cried aloud, "O Lord, hear us; O God of our fathers, save us." "My men will give you an answer," shouted the scornful and blaspheming leader of the assailants, Le Noir of Mondovi by name. He raised his visor as he spoke. At the very instant an arrow from the bow of Pierre Revel of Angrogna, entering betwixt the eyes, transfixed his skull, and he fell down dead. Dismayed at the fall of their leader, the soldiers began to fall back. They were chased down the slopes by the Vaudois, who, having driven them to the plain, returned, as the evening fell, to celebrate their victory with songs on the heights where they had won it. Next day, however, the attack was renewed, but fresh disasters awaited the assailants in the defiles of Angrogna. These we shall have an opportunity of relating as we pass up the valley.



The road now bends, and leads you right up among the mountains—not in a straight line, however, but with sweet windings, adapting itself to the convolutions of the hill-side; here withdrawing you into some cleft or dell, athwart which the chestnut flings its branching arms, and through which there murmurs a little streamlet, and leading you out again round the bluff side of knoll or the sharp edge of rock, and restoring once more the torrent to your side, which, like a pleasant companion, gives you lightsome smiles, and whispers cheerful words, as you pass on amid Angrogna's deepening shadows.

Forward still: the gorge-like character of the valley now comes more fully out. It opens to the eye a mighty cleft which runs on into the very bowels of the Alps, betwixt rocks and cliffs which grow only the more stupendous and rugged as the valley lengthens. The great mountains at the head of Angrogna, invisible till now, begin to be seen; and nearer you, striding right across the valley, and leaving open only the narrow gorge through which the torrent struggles, is a mighty perpendicular wall of rock. You feel that this must be the famous Barricade, the gate of the Pra

del Tor. Within and beyond it lies the inner sanctuary of Angrogna.

Turn now and look behind. Where is the path by which you entered? An invisible hand seems to have closed the doors of Angrogna. An unscalable wall of rock, buttressed by peaks that touch the clouds, meets the eye wherever you turn. Yet not bare or black is this gorge. The silvery Angrogna waters it, and the golden sun pours his beams into it, and bright verdure clothes its bottom and sides, and fringes its great rocks. Mighty chestnut trees, which freely give their shadows and their fruit, wave on its sides, and clothe the mountains to almost their summits. To the Vaudois Angrogna must have seemed a sanctuary: they were here with God, whose power, shewed in the creation of this mighty rampart, was, they knew, on their side. This sentiment has been finely expressed by Mrs Hemans, in her "Hymn of the Vandois Mountaineers," which ends thus,—

“ For the shadow of Thy presence,  
Round our camp of rock outspread ;  
For the stern defiles of battle,  
Bearing record of our dead ;  
For the snows and for the torrents,  
For the free hearts' burial sod ;

For the strength of the hills, we bless Thee,  
Our God, our fathers' God !”

To the men who entered it conscious of an evil purpose, it must have seemed a very prison, with its doors of rock closed behind, and its awful steeps frowning defiance in front. These dark shadows and frowning cliffs must have helped to infuse terror into their minds, and predisposed to that panic, which so often here seized upon them as the courageous shout of Vandois rung from cliff to cliff, like the thunder's peal, and the rocks began to roll from above, as if the mountains were about to fall upon them and bury them.

We descend a little way, and then climb again. At every step noble views of the valley open to us; higher and grander grow its encircling mountains. Nor do the numerous hamlets that meet the eye less delight us, shewing that, despite the fierce tempests that so oft have swept Angrogna, its children still till their ancestral fields, and still dwell beneath the shade of their chestnut trees. Not deserted and lonely, like a Highland glen with its one shieling, is the Valley of Angrogna. It is alive with inhabitants. It contains a population of 2000 and upwards, with some 600 Roman Ca-

tholics. There are not fewer than twelve villages scattered over its surface, besides numerous single chalets. Everywhere their dwellings peer out. They nestle in the meadows; they rise by the margin of the Angrogna; they stand by the side of the path; they are seen clinging to the cliff that looks down upon you from amid the clouds, and everywhere are seen the inhabitants plying industriously their avocations. The children are collecting fagots or gathering nuts in the woods; their parents are cutting grass in the meadows, or they are carrying the sheaves from the field, or they are threshing out the corn, or digging their little plots with the spade. They are contented and courteous withal, and appear to wear much "of the herb called heart's-ease in their bosoms." They salute you from the doors of their dwellings as you pass by; they wave their salutations to you from the fields; they meet you on the path, where maiden and matron, the young child and the grey-haired man, are all equally ready with their kind and courteous "good morning."

We have now reached the hamlet of La Serre. Here it was that the first church or temple—for so they call them in the Valleys—was erected after the

Reformation. For the space of fifty years before that event, I am not aware that they had any edifices for public worship; they had all been razed by their persecutors, and the Vaudois feared to rebuild them, lest they should draw down a fresh storm of persecuting violence. In days of persecution they met in caves, and in peaceful times they assembled in the private dwellings of their Barbes, or, if the weather was fine, on the hill-side, or under the shade of their chestnut trees. But now, the Reformation being come, temples arose, and here was set up the first at La Serre. It may be presumed to occupy the "old site," and is a plain neat building of one story, with a square tower and bell, having a tablet over the doorway, on which are inscribed the words, "Venez et montez á la montagne de l'Eternel, et á la maison du Dieu de Jacob, et il nous instruira de ses voies, et nous marcherons dans ses sentiers," Micah iv. 2;—"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." When more peaceful times visited the Waldenses a second church arose in Angrogna, nearer the entrance of the valley. This temple,

now the principal one in Angrogna, stands at the village we have already passed, San Lorenzo, and beside it is the presbyteré, or pastor's dwelling-house.

Hard by La Serre, at Champforans, was held a famous synod, which we must stay to notice. The light which in days gone by had radiated from Angrogna began now to be reflected back upon its mountain peaks. The Reformation had broke!

“ Joy to the patient and brave !  
The dawn is breaking now !  
It crisks the crest of the purple wave—  
It crimsons the mountain's brow.

We have watch'd in the darkness long,  
But the day is come at last;  
The world o'erfloweth with light and song—  
The night and the cold are past !”

As John testified his joy at the advent of a greater than himself, saying, “ He must increase, but I must decrease,” so did the Waldenses welcome the Reformation. They rejoiced that their feebler light was to merge and be forgotten in the waxing splendour of a greater day. Having first received, by means of deputies and letters, mutual explanations, the Waldenses and the Reformers found that they held “ one Lord, one faith, one baptism,”—

in short, that the ancient Church of the Pra del Tor and the modern Church of Germany and Switzerland were but one Church, and that the old Church of Christ and the apostles; and a synod was convened in Angrogna to give, as it were, public recognition of the fact. The synod met on the 12th of September 1532, and sat for six consecutive days. It was attended by representatives from all the congregations of the Waldenses, and by deputies from the Churches of France, Switzerland, and Bohemia. Among other distinguished strangers present at this synod was William Farel. One of those who kept guard over the synod, Jean Peyrel, being apprehended three years after, deponed on his trial, that amongst the pastors "who taught the good law" was one named "Farel, who had a red beard, and rode a beautiful white horse; and that with him were two others, one mounted on a horse almost black, and the other very tall and somewhat lame." In this latter description we recognise Farel's countryman and fellow-reformer, Antony Saunier, from Dauphiné. This assembly was followed by a striking revival of vital religion and practical zeal among the Waldenses. They submitted themselves

meekly to the rebukes which Æcolampadius had addressed to them by letter, for the unworthy compliances of which they had been guilty, in order to avoid persecution; and they resolved to signalise the meeting, and manifest their oneness with the Reformers, by the appropriate gift of a translation of the Holy Bible into the French tongue. The translation was executed by Olivétan, a kinsman of Calvin; the Bible was printed at Neufchatel in 1535, by Pierre de Wingle, called Pirot Picard, and cost the Waldenses 1500 crowns of gold.

Let us take a glance at the natural sublimities amid which this famous meeting was held. We advance a few paces beyond the hamlet of La Serre. We find ourselves on an ample grassy platform, beneath the shade of noble chestnut trees. The slope, covered with rich grass, intermingled with wild flowers, runs down to the bottom of the valley, and so deep below us is it that the great trees that stand there look mere dots. You can hear the murmur of the Angrogna, but the stream itself is hidden by the luxuriant foliage. From the verdant bottom, which here may be from one to two miles in breadth, rise terraces, climbing the hill sides, with their crops of grain, potatoes, and



other productions, running up among the woods, and rising, in some places, to where the pasture lands and towering rocks announce your approach to the mountain's summit. At about a mile in advance rises the huge vertical wall of rock that forms the barricade. Beyond, seen partly over it and partly through the narrow gorge of the torrent, are the vast slopes which are hung, amphitheatre-like, above the Pra del Tor, with their rich and varied covering of corn-fields, gardens, chalets, rocks, and clumps of trees, all so vivid, yet all appearing so diminutive, by reason of the distance, and by reason, too, of the mighty forms of the surrounding mountains. Above these slopes is an outer and higher rampart of great peaks. At the moment of our seeing them, they wear a covering of fleecy cloud, which the breeze keeps rising and falling upon their summits. The spot is

"Awful as the consecrated roof  
Re-echoing pious anthems!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### Valley of Angrogna—The Barricade.

Gradation of Fortresses—The Hills and their Moral—Descent from La Serre—The Barricade—*Cul de Sac*—Strength of Barricade—The Torrent—Struggles of Waldenses—The Principle contended for—Defile leading to Pra del Tor—Narrowness and Gloominess of Pass—Romantic Scenery—Gate of Pra del Tor—Attack of La Trinita—Heroism—Remarkable Victory—Spirit in which the Waldenses Fought.

WE are only entering on the grandest part of the Val d'Angrogna. It grows by regular gradations from the softest beauty into the most imposing grandeur. The quiet meadows at its entrance swell into the vine-clad heights of Rocamaneot. The heights of Rocamaneot grow into the picturesque and finely-wooded hills of San Lorenzo and La Serre. The mountains of San Lorenzo and La Serre pass into the stern and frowning defiles of the Barricade; and the defiles of the Barricade usher you into the glorious amphitheatre of sublime

mountains in which the valley terminates. Angrogna is in fact a series of mighty fortresses opening the one into the other, and each surpassing that which went before it in massive strength and towering grandeur. We are now approaching the innermost and mightiest of them all.

How would the eye of Vaudois kindle, and his bosom swell, as he gazed on these sublime structures, and thought of the relation they bore to himself, and to the charge committed to his keeping! Here had God placed the ark of his truth, piling mountain upon mountain to form an impregnable rampart around it. Omnipotence was not to be baffled, he knew, in the purpose to be served by the erection of this great bulwark. The enemies of that ark could no more prevail against it than they could pluck these hills from their foundations. With more emphasis even than the Jew of old might the Vaudois say, "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that ye may tell it to the generation following: for this God is our God for ever and ever." Such thoughts could not but be nurtured in their breasts by the magnificence of their hills.

They saw in them an assurance that He who formeth the mountains was on their side, and this helped to make their hearts bold, and their arms strong, when they went forth to battle.

And further, we may well believe that the strength and terrible sublimity of their mountain fastnesses were not altogether lost upon their adversaries. Among mountains the associative faculty is more powerfully stimulated, and one can more vividly realise his relation to the spiritual and the invisible. To the persecutors of the Vaudois, Angrogna could not but be suggestive of ideas uncongenial and terrible. It spoke of an omnipotent power, and made it scarce possible, one should think, to avoid putting the question, "Is this power on our side, or are we impiously fighting against it?" Angrogna rose before them, solemn as a temple, terrible as an embattled fortress. "Surely," they must have said, "this is the dwelling of a righteous people—a spot consecrated to far different feelings and pursuits from those we have brought into it." And this impression would be deepened when they found that they never entered these valleys but to be driven forth with slaughter and disgrace, and that

the most numerous and best appointed of their armies were scattered by the shock of these mountaineers, as the hail of heaven is repelled and flung back from the rocks of their mountains.

We had mounted to the grassy *plateau* on which stands La Serre. Once more the path seeks the bottom of the valley. Let us down to where these meadows offer their bright verdure, and these trees give their goodly shade. Hung high above the level of its entrance is here the bottom of Angrogna, yet far, far below these crags that, from a height so stupendous, look down upon it, and still farther below these peaks that, from a greater height, look down upon the crags. A new panoramic view of the mountains opens with every step downwards. New glories, new terrors, are momentarily rising around us. Pause here, in mid descent, and survey the scene. Its strength and grandeur are indescribable. Right before you is a gigantic circular wall of rock, which so shuts in the valley that you seem to be entering an immense *cul de sac*. Over the top of this cyclopean rampart you can see an assemblage of mountain peaks, rising one behind another, and forming a vast perspective of grandeur. The first rises immediately behind the Barricade;

the second behind the first, leaning over it, and looking down upon it. Behind the second a third shoots up, and behind the third a fourth, which touches the clouds. When you enter the Pra del Tor the scene shifts, and the mountains take up a position in a circle round you; but here, as you descend from La Serre, they range themselves in line, and look like the steps of a mighty stair, on which you might mount upwards and upwards, and stand at the very gates of heaven. Between the first and second summit in this mighty gradation of mountains lies the Pra del Tor,—a garden suspended in the sky—a citadel whose foundations are the eternal hills, and whose battlements mount up to the clouds.

But how are we to ascend to that famous PRA? how escape from this *cul de sac*? We cannot scale that immense wall, and ingress there appears none. The old Eden was not more securely barred against our exiled progenitor by the flaming sword than this Pra appears to be by its doors of rock. But, forward! there will come an outlet at the proper time and place. To the man who has patience to wait, and courage not to despair, there are no barriers through which he will not even-

tually find a passage—no obstacles which he will not in due time surmount. Run your eye along the foot of the barricade all the way to the other side of the valley, where that long dark line is drawn, from top to bottom, on the mountain's face. That is the gate of the Pra del Tor. Through that gorge you must pass in order to reach it.

You now skirt the bottom of the barricade. The path is hewn out of the rock. On the right rises the mountain, steep, craggy, overhanging, and so close to you that you can scarce avoid brushing it as you pass on. How massive and amazing its strength! When did ever rampart like this enclose city or garrison? Peschiera, Ehrenbreitstein, and even the walls that defended of old the riches and glory of Babylon, were in comparison but a screen of gauze!—a fence of wicker-work!

Immediately beneath, on our left, thunders the torrent. It is no longer the silvery stream that it was at the entrance of the valley, where it flowed betwixt green banks, and over a smooth snow-white pebbly bed. It has now assumed a character in keeping with the scenery through which it moves. It rolls along in a channel obstructed by great rocks, and broken by precipices. With

wild fury and thundering noise it dashes from rock to rock, and plunges in a cataract of foam into dark sullen pools, from which it emerges only to resume the same noisy battle with the rocks and precipices of its course. Proceeding in this way we soon stand at the gate of the Pra del Tor.

Alas! how often has this quiet path been trodden by the soldier and the persecutor! Rank has pressed on rank, with glancing helmets and breastplates of steel, up to the gate at which we now stand; and these cliffs have rung with the shout of battle, and that stream has been dammed up with corpses more numerous than its rocks, and that quiet meadow, to which the peasant comes with his scythe, and the child to gather wild flowers, has been trampled under struggling feet, and made slippery with human gore! But the tempest of war, rolling in iron surges up their valley, could not dismay its children. They feared God, and feared not the persecutor "who can kill the body." There they stood, stopping the path, stern, calm, immovable, as stand their own Alps. They gathered on these cliffs as gathers the thunder cloud, and thence they watched the movements of their invaders; and when they beheld them en-



tangled in their defiles, they descended upon them as descends the whirlwind, and chased them from their mountains as chaff is driven before the wind. Thermopylæ witnessed no mightier exploits; the Roman annals record no loftier heroism; and how sublime the cause of which this valley and pass were for centuries the battle-ground! The principle contended for by the Waldenses was a principle which is the root of all liberty, and which, had it been extinguished, the world must have sunk down, without remeid, beneath the yoke of a universal serfdom—the principle of freedom of conscience to wit. It was this principle which made their struggle so unspeakably important, as its fruits have been beyond all calculation rich and precious. Liberty and Christianity had been driven up to their last dyke, and there, leaning against the eternal hills, they stood at bay, and offered battle to their enemies. In the midst of these bloody struggles and throes the liberty of modern times had its birth. God chose not the great or the noble to work this mighty deliverance: He rejected the poets and the warriors, the statesmen and the princes of the age, and He selected this simple people, and by them brought salvation to the earth.

We behold the Waldenses, just come out of their great tribulation, stretching their sorely lacerated hands to Britain, and holding forth the twin inestimable gifts of Christianity and liberty. "These," we hear them say, "these we received from the Church primitive and apostolic. These we have carried down over an hundred battle-fields, and through prisons and stakes innumerable. These we bequeath to you. Take them, and guard them well. They have cost us much; they will make you the rulers of the world!"

We now enter the defile that leads up to the Pra. It is a place where light and darkness jostle one another. It is streaked and barred by the deep shadows of the mountains, and the golden beams which flow in through their rents. This gives a fairy wildness, a romantic gloominess, to the pass. It is long, and winding, and narrow, having room in the bottom for only the path on which we are treading, and the torrent that thunders by our side. The mountains rise on this side and on that like a wall. Here the naked cliff runs sheer up to the height of several thousand feet. There it hangs over the path in stupendous masses that threaten to fall and bury us for ever; and at

other places it is shattered and broken, as if earthquake had shivered it, or rather had jumbled the hills together, and piled their rocks up to a fearful height, leaving many of them so evenly poised that the slightest touch would send them swift as the thunderbolt, and with force as destructive, into the ravine below.

Not all naked rock is this defile. On the other side of the torrent the mountains come down in perpendicular, naked, dark slopes, to its very brink. Not a footbreadth is there betwixt the rock and the stream. Deep clefts, too, cut the mountain, and, through the darkness of their gorges, white streamlets may be seen stealing down to join the Angrogna. But on your right, as you advance towards the Pra del Tor, the mountain is not so uniformly precipitous and overhanging. In several places its top falls back and its sides slope. There it is feathery with woods, or roughened with great rocks, amid which rises the tall birch, with its slender stem of silvery whiteness and its curving branchy top. And in other places terraces climb the hill, and chalets peer out, with their bit of bright close-shaven meadow, their clump of chestnut and cherry trees, their corn fields, and potato beds.

The path runs on in this fashion for about two miles. The features of the pass change and shift at every step. Now you are in shadow—now in sunshine; now the wall of mountain hems you in—now the cliff hangs its fearful masses above your head—and now the chestnut flings its shadows down upon you. Now your foot is on the edge of a dizzy precipice—now your path touches the margin of the torrent. Now some chasm discloses its abyss of darkness—and now you are charmed by the sudden burst of some spot of cultivation and verdure, which looks exquisitely soft amid the ruggedness and darkness of these rocks. At last you arrive at the strongest point of the pass.

Here an angle of the mountain is projected forward upon the path, while, on the other side, fixed in the precipitous bank of the torrent, stands a gigantic rock. The opening between these two masses is very narrow—not wider than will admit of the passage of a single horseman, or of two footmen abreast. Access to the *Præ* beyond is not but through this gate. Not on the right, where rises the mountain—not on the left, where is the precipice, over which, if you step aside in the least, you will fall headlong into the torrent. To friend and

foe alike, the only path to the Pra del Tor lies betwixt these masses of rock.

This spot is famous as the scene of a most memorable exploit—one of those deeds of daring heroism of which we read only in the annals of the Waldenses and of the Jewish race, in their better times. It was the year 1561, and the Count La Trinita, with his soldiers, lay encamped at the entrance of the Valleys. Having lulled the suspicions of the Vaudois by engaging them in negotiations for peace, he perfidiously assaulted the Valley of Angrogna on the morning of the 16th of April. To the Pra del Tor, as the strongest position which their mountains afforded, had almost all the Waldensian families been removed for asylum. They had assembled at daybreak, as their custom then was, to engage in united social prayer. The first rays of the sun were beginning to lit up their mountains, and the last cadences of their morning psalm was dying away in the Pra del Tor, when the alarm was given that La Trinita, with his soldiers, was advancing to attack them.

On the instant six of their bravest mountaineers, dashing down the valley, posted themselves in the narrow defile. The first two knelt down; the

second two stood erect, prepared to fire over the heads of their compatriots; the remaining two charged themselves with the loading of the muskets. The host came on, in long glittering file, two abreast. The first two were shot down; the second shared the same fate; and so, too, did the third. The Piedmontese were confounded and staggered by an attack that was as deadly as it was unexpected; and these six men were able to keep in check the whole army, till succour had time to arrive from those behind them. Meanwhile the less warlike of the Waldenses betook them to the hill-side, and began to roll down stones and rocks on the host below. The forces of La Trinita were unable to advance—they were unable even to fight. Jammed in the narrow defile, they perished where they stood, by the firing kept up upon them in front, and the rocks that were rolled upon them from above, and which crushed them by dozens at a time. Panic seized them. In their haste to escape they jostled and trod upon one another, and, falling over the precipices, were dashed on the rocks, or drowned in the river. "The river" of Angrogna "swept them away, that ancient river." "O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength."

A few only of that great host escaped to carry tidings of their discomfiture and destruction to their co-religionists on the plain. The Count La Trinita, on beginning his march that morning, had vaunted to his friends that before mid-day they should see the torrent of Angrogna running red. That prediction was verified. The sun had not yet attained his noon-day height when the crystal of the Angrogna was changed into blood; but the blood that dyed it was not the blood of the poor Vaudois, but the blood of his own ferocious soldiery.

For centuries the great conflict of conscience against power continued to rage almost ceaselessly in the defiles we are now traversing. The battle ebbed and flowed. Sometimes it was conscience that triumphed, and sometimes it was power that prevailed. The struggle was signalised by victories great, marvellous, indeed we might call them miraculous, on the side of the Waldenses. An handful of men would route an army of many thousands. Often did the Piedmontese count their slain by hundreds, while scarce a man had fallen on the other side. Numbers, discipline, equipments, a rage demoniacally fanatic and murderous, all counted for nothing—all went down before the

cool, calm, unconquerable heroism of the undisciplined, and all but unarmed Waldenses! To them the ancient promise was fulfilled, "And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight."

Nor was the spirit of devotion that was maintained all through these conflicts less admirable. Their valleys resounded not less with the voice of prayer and praise than with the din of arms. Their opponents came from carousing, from blaspheming, from murdering, to engage in battle; the Waldenses rose from their knees to fight. Their Barbes always accompanied their little army, to inspire them by their exhortations before battle was joined, and, after victory had been won, to moderate the infliction of their much provoked and long-suffering vengeance. When the fighting men hastened to the bastion or to the defile, the pastors repaired to the mountain's summit, where, with uplifted hands, they supplicated help from the "Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." And when they had chased their foes from their valleys, and the setting sun was tinting with glory the mountain peaks of their once more ransomed land, they would assemble in the Pra del



Tor, the gray-haired pastor, the lion-hearted man of battle, the matron, the maiden, and the young child, and, uniting their voices, they would sing the old heroic war song of Judah, while their sublime rocks would send back the thunder of their praise in louder echoes than those of the previous battle, whose triumphant issue they were celebrating.

“ In Judah's land God is well known,  
His name's in Israel great:  
In Salem is His tabernacle,  
In Zion is His seat.  
There arrows of the bow He brake,  
The shield, the sword, the war.  
More glorious Thou than hills of prey,  
More excellent art far.

Those that were stout of heart are spoil'd,  
They slept their sleep outright;  
And none of those their hands did find,  
That were the men of might.  
When Thy rebuke, O Jacob's God,  
Had forth against them past,  
Their horses and their chariots both  
Were in a dead sleep cast.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

*Valley of Angrogna—The Pra del Tor.*

Indian Sepoys outdone by Piedmontese Papists—Martyr Heroism—Cataneo penetrates the Val d'Angrogna—A Strange Bridle—Miraculous Deliverance—Tompie de Saquet—Memorabilia of the Pass—*Nemesis*—The Memory of the Martyr eternal—The Pra del Tor—Its Roominess—Its Isolation—Its Desolation—Retreat of Christianity in the Dark Ages—The Barbes—Their College—Theology—Church Government—Missions—Martyrdom of a Barbe.

BUT there were times when the battle inclined to the side of power. This, however, rarely or never happened, unless when their enemies had recourse to arts as well as arms. The history of the Waldensian race furnishes scarce an instance in which, when they stood unitedly and bravely to their defence, God suffered them to be overcome. It was only when they gave ear to the soft persuasions and the perfidious promises of their adversaries, and were prevailed on to lay down their

arms, that the poor Vaudois were given as sheep to the slaughter. Then the Valleys became a wide shambles. Butcheries and atrocities were committed, cruel, nameless, inconceivable, horrible, such even as a fiend, one should have thought, would have blushed to be guilty of. The civilised world has lately been shocked and horrified by the cruel massacre of our countrymen and countrywomen in India. But we appeal to every reader of Leger, the Vaudois historian, whether the Romanists of Piedmont did not surpass the Sepoys of India in fertility of ingenious and hellish cruelty, and whether, in the story of the Waldenses, there are not horrible and appalling modes of shame, of torture, and of death, not to be found among the barbarities and horrors of the Sepoy atrocity, even granting that all the Indian details are literally and absolutely true. But it was these dark scenes that brought sublimely forth the martyr steadfastness of the Waldenses. They never wavered; they hesitated, no, not for an instant betwixt the alternative presented by their enemies—the mass or death. They dared to die, no matter in what horrible and awful form; but to go to mass, to renounce their Saviour, they dared not. Both ways

they baffled and overcame their foe. They baffled him by their valour in the field, and they baffled him, too, by their heroism at the stake. "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

Let us glance at some other of the *memorabilia* of this pass. You see that sullen pool below you, on which that tall cliff casts its dark shadow, like an evil omen? That is the Tompie de Saquet. But who was that Saquet, or why does this pool bear his name? The incident we are about to relate happened in 1487, during the invasion of Cataneo, to which reference was made in the former chapter, where we related how the supplication for peace was met by words of scorn. Seeing war inevitable, the Waldenses set about instant and vigorous preparations for it. They manufactured pikes and other arms, repaired the barriers, divided their fighting men into parties, assigning to each their post. They humbled themselves before God and fasted. They partook together of the Supper. Last of all they removed their families within their lines of defence, carrying with them provisions and cooking utensils, and bearing in their arms and on

their shoulders their young, their aged, and their sick, and making the mountain paths resound with their psalms as they journeyed up the ascent.

Again and again had Cataneo essayed to enter the Valley of Angrogna, amid whose mighty bulwarks of rock and great sheltering trees almost the whole Vaudois people had sought refuge; but as often, as he had led his soldiers to the attack they had as often been repulsed. Burning with rage and shame, he resolved to make yet another attempt. Having entered, he this time succeeded in advancing as far up the valley as the barricade. But here his further progress was suddenly arrested. God put His hook in his nose, and His bridle in his lips, and caused him to return by the way by which he came. But how? What was the agency which God employed to arrest that mighty host? Did He command an angel to take his stand in its path, and smite it as he had smitten the host of Sennacherib?. No angel with drawn sword blockaded the pass. Did He rain hot thunderbolts, or great hailstones, as He had done on Sisera? The thunders slept: no hailstones descended. Did God contend with these enemies by earthquake and mighty whirlwinds? No earthquake rocked

the ground, no whirlwind rent the mountains. By what instrumentality did God work? He made use of one of the lightest, frailest agents in all nature; one which would not have been thought strong enough to hold a child. The fetters into which God cast this great host was the mist of the mountains: yet no fetters of steel, no bars of adamant, could have more effectually arrested its progress. As the soldiers came marching up the valley, a white cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, was seen to gather on the hill top. It rapidly enlarged. It came rolling down the sides of the mountain, swallowing up rock and pine forest in its progress; and now it fell, in the form of a black fog, into the defile up which the host was advancing. In a moment that host were in dark palpable night. The Waldenses, taking this as a signal from God, fell upon that host, now caught in the double toils of the defile and the mist. They attacked them in front with the sword; they rolled avalanches of rocks down upon them, which crushed them where they stood. Consternation seized the host. Panic drove them to flight; and that flight was more fatal than the sword of the Vaudois, or than the rocks that came thundering down from

the mountain. They trod each other under foot, or falling headlong over the precipices, they perished miserably on the rocks, or in the torrent.

In that army was a certain Captain Saquet, a man, it is said, of gigantic stature. He began, like his Philistine prototype, to vent curses against the Waldensian dogs. The words were yet in his mouth, when a stone, from the hand of Vaudois, struck him, and hurled him into the gulph below. The pool, to this day, bears the name of the Tompie de Saquet, or Gulph of Saquet.

There is not one of their valleys more illustrated with these sad yet glorious scenes than this same Valley of Angrogna. Every rock has its story. As you pass up it, you are shewn the spot where the young children were dashed against the stones—the spot where men and women were thrown over precipices, and where, caught by the stems of trees, or the sharp projecting angles of rocks, they hung transfixed for days enduring the agony of a living death. They shew you, too, the spot behind the rocks where the cave opens, into which some hundreds of the Waldenses retreated, and where, lighting a fire at its entrance, their enemies found for them a common grave. But time and space would

fail us to tell but a tithe of what has here been done and suffered. Great as is the physical grandeurs of this pass, its moral grandeurs are yet greater. It is crowded all throughout with sad yet glorious memories.

But nothing of all this is written on the rocks. As you pass by them, they are utterly silent regarding the crimes they have witnessed. The stains they once bore the rains of heaven have washed out, and no *memento* remains that our eye can see. Yet there *are* mementoes in this pass, and there are existing consciences that can read them. Crime, it is true, does not embody itself, and stand as a grisly terror on the spot where it was done; and yet it does leave there traces which are ineffaceable and eternal. There is a law that links the crime with the spot where it was done, and makes the image of that crime to sit henceforward on that spot as an avenging Nemesis. Suppose one of the actors in these dreadful doings should return and walk through this pass, what would he *see* and *hear* in it? Far other things than those we have seen and heard. We have seen only the dancing shadows, the bright sunbeams, the nodding rocks, and the sweet châlets :



we have heard only the torrent's thunder. *He* would hear accusing voices crying from every rock. He would see the valley written all over with characters of fire. Ghastly apparitions, horrid shapes, would start up and glare upon him. He would walk all the way amid a crowd of menacing spectres. It would be to him a place of judgment, of condemnation, of burning. It would be tophet. It would be pandemonium.

But willingly do we drop from our thoughts the wicked man and his deeds. His deeds are deeds of darkness and of shame: we execrate them and forget them. But it is otherwise with the martyr. His deeds make for themselves an enduring place in the world's affection and veneration. His example is a star that shines through all time; his spirit is a power that rules the world through all its after generations. This it does by that law of our nature which makes what is lovely and heroic, rather than what is villainous and base, entwine itself around our sympathies, and take eternal hold of our memories. Scripture truly as emphatically says, "The memory of the wicked shall rot, but the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

But we must forward. We have gone but a

little way beyond the gate of rock, when we find the defile beginning to open out. There is more light, you feel, breaking in, the scenery is getting less rugged and savage, the hills are retiring on this side and on that, and now there opens before you a long green hollow, reposing within a magnificent ring of peaks and castellated crags. This is the famous *Pra* or Meadow of the Tower. It is not properly a plain: it is simply an elongated basin, having a narrow strip of meadow in the bottom, intersected by the torrent. Its sides are formed of grassy slopes, which run up by a steep ascent to the eternal hills that tower above you, and leave nothing visible but the blue vault. Its sides are hung amphitheatre-like above the little valley, and are mostly clothed with pasturages and corn-fields, intermingled with potatoes and other fruits, clumps of chestnut trees, and a few chalets. The capacity of the place is great, much greater than it looks at first, for the great hills that stand round it have a diminishing effect upon its apparent size. If you traverse it, it lengthens out: if you climb its sides, they spread out into breadths of pasture and corn land of which you have no previous conception. The valley is ob-

viously adapted to give harbourage to a vast multitude of people.

The first thing that strikes you is the extreme simplicity of the scene, and its profound isolation from the rest of the world. Here you feel that you are in the very heart of the Alps: if you lift your eye from the stream and the meadow, it is to fix it on a wall of stupendous mountains. There rises the sublime form of the Sella Vecchia, on whose summit vegetation slumbers, and from amid whose snows the Angrogna goes forth to water the vale. There towers the Infernet Alp, there rises the mighty peak of La Vechera, and there other summits stand up, silent and majestic in the firmament. How profound the quiet! A Sabbath stillness reigns in the valley, and that stillness is eternal, for up these defiles the faintest echo of the world's noise never passed, save when the murderous soldier sought its hallowed retreats to slay its children.

Where, you ask, are the traces of the school of the prophets which once stood here? You look for them in vain. Not one stone has been left upon another. There must have been at times numerous habitations in this valley; for once and

again the whole Waldensian people well-nigh were driven into it. But the rocks and caves very probably afforded them shelter, and what habitations there were above ground must have been extemporised ones, and would speedily crumble into dust on being abandoned. Certain it is that not a vestige of these remain, unless we regard as such the furrowed and tumbled appearance of portions of its bottom and sides, reminding one of the aspect of the plain outside the walls of Rome, where the former buildings have left their marks in the low irregular swellings that diversify the soil. All its ecclesiastical buildings were destroyed in the exile of the Waldenses in 1686. A Roman Catholic church stands in the meadow; and the most probable opinion is, that this church stands on the site of the ancient college, just as the mosque of Omar at Jerusalem stands on the former site of the temple.

Yet secluded as this valley is, it has played an important part in the history of the world. It has chanced me to visit in my time not a few spots well fitted to awaken emotion—the gloomy plains of Waterloo, Marengo, and others. I have stood where the dagger of Brutus struck down Cæsar; on the mount where the masters of the world for

ages dwelt; on the spot where Cicero harangued; on the square where Savonarolla was burnt; in the amphitheatre where the primitive Christians contended with the lions. I have traversed the Via Sacra over whose stones the chariot of Titus has rolled, and where the yet greater footsteps of Paul have been; but no spot have I ever trodden with a deeper reverential feeling than this little plain. Here stood the two apocalyptic olive trees. Here burned the mystic candlestick. It is severely simple. Ornament it has none save that which nature gives it, which is the green sward and the mountain torrent, and its circling line of peaks and alpine snows. But viewed with the mind's eye, what a grandeur belongs to it? Where in all Italy, that land of proud fanes, is there a temple so venerable? Here Christianity dwelt enshrined during many ages of dark idolatry and rude violence; and from this spot, when her period of seclusion was fulfilled, she came forth like the day to brighten Europe.

One would like to have a near view of the Barbès, who here had their school, and to know what manner of men they were, and how it fared with our religion in the ages before the Reforma-

tion; but the time is remote and the events are dim. According to some, the Barbes sat in a cave, their scholars standing round them: according to others, they met in a house or college. These statements are easily reconciled by supposing that their place of resort was now a building, now a cave, as the times permitted. The text-book was the Bible, and the Gospels and Epistles were in good part committed to memory. To this was added, in later ages, exercises in grammar, logic, moral philosophy, and medicine. As regards the learning and literature of the times, the Waldenses, both pastors and people, appear to have been always fully abreast of their age. The hours of study were the morning and evening, the forenoon being given to excursions in their valley in quest of herbs, which formed the whole of their simple pharmacopœia.

Their theology was in accordance with the fountain from which it was drawn—the Bible. The atoning death and justifying righteousness of Christ was the cardinal tenet of their teaching. This is abundantly manifest from the noble lesson and other ancient documents which have been preserved. Indeed, had any doubt remained that

the doctrines of the Barbes were those which the Apostles had taught before them, and which the Reformers taught after them, their enemies would have set that doubt at rest. They have made out a very formidable list of heresies entertained by the Waldenses, and amongst other "execrable errors" imputed to them are the following:—They held that Rome was the Babylon of the Apocalypse, that there had been no true pope since Sylvester, that temporal dignities and powers did not become ministers of Christ, that purgatory is a fable, that prayer in a stable is equally prevalent with prayer in a temple, that rain water is as efficacious as holy water, that flesh may be eaten any day, that prayer ought to be addressed to God only, with a multitude of other tenets judged equally impious and dangerous by the doctors of Rome.

As to their Church government, there can be as little doubt that it more nearly resembled the Presbyterian than any other form with which we are acquainted. Ordination was performed by the whole company of pastors, and the laying on of hands. Every September a general synod was held, at which the affairs of the whole Church were discussed and regulated, and a president or

moderator chosen. The title and office continue to this day. At some of these synods in olden times there would assemble as many as an hundred and forty Barbes. They had moreover their consistories or kirk-sessions. Each pastor visited his whole flock once every year, to counsel and catechise. They nominated arbitrators in cases of dispute, watched over the sick and the young, admonished the erring, and pronounced sentence of excommunication on the irreclaimable—an extremity which the state of morals in the valleys made rarely necessary. They were supported by voluntary contributions, which, being paid into a common fund (the earliest sustentation fund we know of), were annually divided into three parts, whereof one was given to the pastors, one to the poor, and one to missions. "They were," says Sir Samuel Morland, "a generation of humble, holy, and harmless men, of a meek, peaceable, and quiet spirit; exceeding painful in their calling, and carefully watching over the flocks committed to their charge; labouring faithfully in the Lord's vineyard, and employing their whole time and talents for turning many souls unto righteousness; and this they did by much labour and travel, by



watchings and fastings, by suffering many buffetings, stripes, and imprisonments, yea, and many times even death itself, they being for the most part constrained to seal the truths they preached unto others with the last drop of their own blood."

The Church of the Valleys was in those days the one evangelistic Church of the world. Its ministers began their career as missionaries, in which work they served three years, before being eligible to a home charge. They went forth in pairs, not unfrequently as pedlars—a disguise which opened to them alike the door of cottage and of baronial hall. They carried ostensibly silks, jewels, and other wares, which were not to be had, in those days, save at distant marts;—and more precious merchandise still did they carry with them. Concealed on their person were portions of the Bible in manuscript, and most adroitly often did they manage to place this "pearl of great price" in the hands of the buyers of their other wares, and when offered money, they would reply,

"Nay, keep thy gold, I ask it not,  
For the Word of God is free."

There was no state and no city of Italy which the Barbes did not visit, and where they did not leave

disciples behind them. Even in Rome itself they might occasionally be seen, with their naked feet, and their coarse woollen garments, making but a homely figure amid the scarlet and fine linen of the purple city, but the liker to those of whom it had been foretold<sup>d</sup> that they should "prophesy in sackcloth." They spread into Dauphiné and Provence; they travelled as far as Bohemia, Germany, and the Rhine. They have left their memorials in Britain in the "Lollard Tower" in London, and the "Lollards of Kyle" in Scotland; names derived, as is commonly believed, from Valtero Lollardo, a famous Barbe, who wrote a commentary on the Revelation, and who visited this country in the fourteenth century. In short, in almost all the countries of western Europe the Barbes sowed, amid perils and martyrdom, the seed of the kingdom; and, putting all facts together, we are justified in saying, that the parent springs of the great Reformation of the sixteenth century are to be traced up to the school of the prophets in the Pra del Tor.

" Those had given earliest notice, as the lark  
Sprints from the ground the morn to gratulate;  
Or rather rose the day to antedate,  
By striking out a solitary spark,  
When all the world with midnight gloom was dark."

Ordination in those days was no light matter. It was to be "baptized for the dead." The aspirant on whom the assembled Barbes in the Pra del Tor laid their hands saw in the distance not a benefice, but a possible dungeon or stake. Of the missionaries thus sent forth some returned, many alas! returned no more. They went forth into strange lands, and never saw again their white hills, and the valleys for which the Vaudois heart yearns with an intensity unknown to the inhabitants of other lands. What their fate, whether they expired on the rack, or rotted in foetid dungeons, or died at the stake, could be only guessed at by their brethren. Of this "great cloud of witnesses," the names of only a few have been preserved; the rest are to be found nowhere, to use the graphic language of one respecting our own martyrs, "save in the roll laid up beneath the throne of the Lamb." There, however, not one is missing. Of those whose death has been recorded let us take an instance.

We bid a short adieu to the white summit of La Vechera, and the grassy meads and silvery torrent of the Pra del Tor, and take our stand on this low hill in the midst of this vast outspread

plain. Below us is a city in purple glory, uprearing her domes, monuments, and palaces with an air that seems to say, "I am a queen, and shall see no sorrow." What city is this? This is the Janiculum Mount, and that city is Rome. Yonder, in hoary grandeur, rises the Coliseum, with its stains of early Christian blood not yet washed out; beside it, the partner of its guilt and doom, lies the Palatine. Nearer us, burning in the noonday sun, is the proud cupola of St Peter's, flanked by the huge mole of Hadrian, beneath whose ramparts we see the Tiber rolling onwards in sullen majesty. But mark what crowds of people issue from every street of the city, and, pouring across the bridge, roll in a living stream towards the castle of St Angelo! Why does Rome keep holiday? Why do all her bells ring? What goodly spectacle are the old towers of St Angelo this day to witness? Let us join the crowd.

We enter the portals of the castle. What an imposing sight!—what an august assembly! In the centre rises a lofty throne, on which sits the pontiff, Pius IV. Behind him, in scarlet and mitred rows, are the cardinals and other dignitaries of the Papal See; and above these, rising tier on tier,

are the nobility and beauty of Rome. A dense mass of ordinary citizens covers the entire floor of the castle yard, save in the middle, where, over the sea of human heads, rises a scaffold with its iron stake and its bundle of fagots. There is a movement in the crowd at the gate, and a storm of hissing and execration announces the entrance of the sole actor in the tragedy of the day. We hear the clank of the irons with which his limbs are loaded as he drags his steps painfully across the paved court-yard. He is still young, but his face is pale and haggard with suffering. With looks undismayed he regards the assembly and the dismal apparatus of death. There sits a calm lofty courage on his brow, and the serene light of deep untroubled peace beams in his steadfast eye. He ascends the scaffold: he stands beside the stake. "Good people," says the martyr, and the assembly keep silence, "I am come here to die for confessing the doctrine of my Divine Master and Saviour, Jesus Christ;" and he goes on to arraign the Pope as the enemy of Christ, the persecutor of His people, the Antichrist of Scripture, and to summon him and his cardinals to answer for their cruelties and murders before the throne of the Lamb. At his words,

says the historian Crispin, the people were deeply moved, and the pope and the cardinals gnashed their teeth.

The inquisitors gave the signal: the executioners, approaching, strangled him, and, having lighted the fagots, the fire speedily did its work. His ashes were collected and thrown into the Tiber, by the Tiber they were borne to the Mediterranean, where they await the resurrection to that "eternal life which," as said our own Patrick Hamilton, "none can possess who deny Christ."

So died Jean Louis Paschale, a Waldensian missionary, and a pastor of the flock in Calabria, on the 9th of September 1560. Similar scenes were at that time of almost weekly occurrence, not at Rome only, but in all the chief cities of Italy, of Spain, and of the south of France. When she burned these martyrs Rome gave us at the same time a sign which we thankfully accept, and which Wordsworth thus interprets:—

"As thou these ashes, little brook! wilt bear  
 Into the Avon, Avon to the tide  
 Of Severn, Severn to the narrow seas,  
 Into main ocean they, this deed accurst,  
 An emblem yields to friends and enemies,  
 How the bold Teacher's doctrine, sanctified  
 By truth, shall spread, throughout the world dispersed."

## CHAPTER IX.

*Ascent of La Combe.*

**Fair or foul?—Transforming Power of Light—Aerial Skirmishers—  
A Cicero—Start for Rora—La Combe—The Ascent of the Moun-  
tain—Valley of Luserna seen from La Combe—Grand View of the  
Vandalin—Nature's Paintings superior to Man's.**

THE next morning, the 20th of August, rose in clouds. My return to La Torre on the previous evening had been attended with a thunder-storm, which filled the Valley of Luserna with premature night, and kindled a livid blaze of fire every few minutes on the lofty brow of Mont Vandalin. But the fiercer the storm, the more confidently I reckoned on fair weather next morning.

Every one who has visited Italy knows that one charming peculiarity of its climate is the suddenness with which its skies clear up after rain. Its storms are frightful while they last. Clouds of pitchy blackness gather with astounding rapidity. Night,

you think, is coming on : it is ominously still : in a moment the lightning breaks from the cloud overhead, and a flood of flame, whose blaze fills the whole horizon, flashes down upon the earth. The roar succeeds, and such a roar ! the very plain quakes beneath your feet. This uproar lasts for some little time : the forked bolts come fast and fiery, as if they meant to enkindle the forests, and convert into ashes all man's works.

But the uproar ends as suddenly as it began. The cloud passes on, with its sweeping torrents and its coals of fire, and scarce has the last peal died away till the day is forth once more, treading with golden steps upon mountain and meadow, and by its placid look reassuring nature, which had, as it were, been beaten down, and lay cowering and affrighted under the sudden and furious onset.

And so, I doubted not, it would be now. Therefore, though the night fell amid lurid gleams and drenching rains, I entertained no fears for my purposed visit to the Valley of Rora on the morrow. Long ere the hour of dawn the storm would have spent itself I believed, and the Castelluzzo, looking through an azure firmament, would greet with cloudless summit the coming day. The more con-



fidant my anticipations the greater was my mortification, on getting up, to find that the dregs of the previous storm still lingered in the sky, touching the summits of the Vandalin with mist, draping in cold shadows the form of the Castelluzzo, and leaving uncertain the character of the opening day. In short, the weather seemed to have lost for once its Italian buoyancy, and to have borrowed a little of the phlegm of our English sky, which, like an ill-tempered man once put out of sorts, will continue dull, sullen, morose, for days after.

I paced to and fro in the little court of the Hotel L'Ours, watching the turn things might take. The six weary days I had done the same thing, in the autumn of 1851, without being once rewarded by even a momentary glimpse of the opening heavens, or an hour's intermission in the storm of gathering cloud and pelting rain that kept beating upon the Alps, returned vividly, but not very pleasantly, to my mind. Had I come back to endure a like imprisonment? Was the land of the Vaudois to me an interdicted land; and was I fated, on each attempt to explore it, to be met by fire and tempest on its borders, and forbidden access? Into this gloomy channel were my thoughts beginning to

turn, when, to my unspeakable delight, a bit of deep summer blue, lovely as the opening windows of heaven, began to peer up at the head of the valley, breaking in a zone of silent spiritual beauty over the top of the mighty rampart of rock that there walls it in.

The bright azure gained space upon the dull cold vapour. Gradually the cloud was rolled back from the face of heaven. The sun was not visible as yet—dark clouds still enwrapped him; but his beams, finding egress through the opening in the cloud, fell in a slanting flood of glory upon the engirdling rocks beyond Bobbio. What a transforming power in the light! The cold naked precipices were transformed by the touch of the solar ray into a wall of jasper. The rock shone with a radiance that filled the whole valley with an air of gaiety and splendour. Overhead, matters went on improving. A full half of the firmament was now unveiled, and discovered an arch of deep, transparent, fathomless blue. It was the sky of Italy! that lovely sky which the very earth seems to know, and, when it sees, makes haste to array itself in bridal robes, and to repay with smiles and singing, through all its mountain-tops

and valleys, the beautiful light which is rained upon it.

Murky clouds still rested on the summit of the great wall of mountains that bounds the Valley of Luserna along its southern side, and divides it from the Valley of Rora. These would suddenly become piled up, one over the other, on the mountain's summit, and roll over upon its sides, as if about to burst in tempest; and then again they would as suddenly withdraw, and leave undisturbed the reign of the fair day. Now they would send down a squadron of fleecy clouds, like an advanced body of skirmishers, heralding a general attack; and now, as if repulsed, or seized with sudden panic, they would make a rapid retreat up the mountain. It was clear that these capricious and unexplained proceedings on the hill-top were to be regarded as a modification or abatement of the promise of fine weather held out by the clearing sky in the north. It might be fair: it might be foul. It was evident that this important question was being debated on the summit of Monte Viso. I could not be one of the council, nor could I wait, without losing the day, till infallible signs should announce the final determination; and so I resolved

to start for Rora, and take my chance of the weather.

Professor Revel, of La Torre College, had kindly offered to be my guide to the summit of the barrier chain that divides the Val Luserna from the Valley of Rora. The path up the mountain, he said, was so intricate, now threading pine forest, now crossing pasturage and stubble land, and now leading along rocky ledge, that it was impossible I should find it without assistance; but once on the hill-top, to which he should conduct me, I could be at no loss as to my way. A distinctly-traced path goes winding along, down the vast slope to the bottom of the valley, and once in the ravine I must needs follow its course till brought round again to the entrance of the Val Luserna. I acquiesced, being but too glad to have the double favour of his assistance and his society.

Having breakfasted, we set forth. We passed along through the narrow, well paved, and lofty street of La Torre. Its population, cleanly, active, industrious, were already abroad in considerable numbers, each intent on his own proper business, and not loitering idly, as is the case in every town of the other Italian States, where you

" See streets whose echoes never know the voice  
Of cheerful Hurry, Commerce many-tongued,  
And Art mechanic at his various task  
Fervent employ'd. Mark the desponding race,  
Of occupation void as void of hope."

So sang Thomson of Italy, but such scenes do not offend the eye and pain the heart in the Valleys.

We traversed next the adjoining village of Marguerita, which lies along the highway in a single street of houses. Emerging from the dwellings, the meadow-paved and rock-girt valley of the Pelice opened before us. What a burst of beauty and grandeur! and how instantaneously it rises upon you! A single step from the narrow winding street and you are full in presence of the valley, with its embossments of pine forests, its massy shadows, its yawning gorges, and its rampart of glittering pinnacles atop! Beneath you, on the left, is the ample bottom of the valley, with its meadows so fresh and bright, and its vines stretching their arms, in classic freedom, from tree to tree. On the right rises the Castelluzzo—serene, eternal. You stand at its foot, and high in air it hangs its precipices, with their many tragic memories, above you. The sun's rays strike full on the barrier of rock at the upper extremity of the valley, burnishing with gold the

grand peaks of the Col de Malure and the Col de la Croix.

At the foot of the Castelluzzo we struck off on the left, and descended into the bottom of the valley. We traversed its meadows, in which peasants were busied with haymaking. We crossed the torrent of the Pelice by a small bridge, and held on our way till we had reached the bottom of the mountains, among which is La Combe, that wall in the Val Luserna on the other side. These are not nearly so lofty, nor are they so rich in their fine blendings of beauty exquisitely soft with rugged towering grandeur, as the mighty wall that stands confronting them.

We began our ascent. The path went on, as Professor Revel had said, steep and winding, rewarding us a thousandfold by the various lights and shades in which it presented the whole scenery around us. Now we traversed verdant pasturages, soft to the foot, and fresh to the eye; now the gloom of forest mantled us. Now we carefully and toilsomely picked our steps amid rocks and ledges; and now we wound past farm-houses and barnyards, into which the grain harvest had already been gathered.

By and by the chestnut disappeared, and the pine took its place. Little streamlets leaped down beside the path, and though the day could scarce be called hot, for still we had a slight covering of cloud, their crystal waters were exceedingly grateful. Deeper and deeper grew the valley beneath. A thread of silver was now the torrent of the Pellice. The various fruitage of its banks—the chestnut, the vine, the acacia—all became lost to the eye, being now blended with the general green of the plain. Higher and more magnificent grew the opposing wall of mountains. Often we paused to look behind, and each survey discovered new grandeurs coming into view—peaks standing up, and gorges opening, disclosing far retreating vistas of forests and farms lying in the folds of the mountain, and unseen by the traveller on the plain.

An ascent of two hours brought us to the summit of the pass. It is worth pausing a few minutes to survey the scene. You have here a site, some four thousand feet high, in the midst of a stupendous amphitheatre of Alps, on which to stand and view their glories. Turn, first, and look behind. How profoundly deep the valley from which you have just climbed upwards! There is La Torre,

amid its meadows and woods, immediately below you. A pebble, you fancy, dropt from the hand, would light upon its roofs. Yonder, higher up the valley, is the white Villaro. You see its spire glancing in the sunlight, and its clump of brown roofs strongly relieved by the deep verdure that surrounds them. Following the windings of the Pelice you come to the head of the valley, where the eye is lost amidst a boundless wilderness of yawning gorges, pinnacles of rock, and towering summits. Beneath these is seated Bobbio, of which, however, not a glimpse is to be had from this spot.

Right across the mouth of the Val Luserna, towering still above you, is the Castelluzzo. Next comes the Vandalin, with its magnificent rolling masses. Its lower slopes are one vast hanging garden, utterly dwarfing those of which we read as adorning Babylon, to create which the wealth and power of the great king were lavishly put forth. What varied loveliness, what overflowing luxuriance, clothe that hill-side! How magnificently hung with terraces! how begemmed with white châteaux! How variously clothed with rich vineyards, flourishing chestnut woods, and crops of maize, picturesquely broken and diversified by



castellated crags and shooting pinnacles, and still further enlivened by rills and torrents innumerable, that tumble in foam down the ravines, or leap in flashing light from rock to rock of the mountain!

Towering high above the woods and dwellings that cover the lower reaches of the Vandalin, and rising sublimely into the air, is a tumultuous sea of torn and tossed summits, here rising in needles, there running off in long serrated ridges; and there standing up in massy peaks of naked granite, with the white cloud playing round them, or wearing the shining garments which winter weaves for the giants of the Alps.

How barren and feeble is man's imagination! how feeble the imagination of even the most gifted! Where have they given us pictures like those of Nature? Place their happiest efforts side by side with the realities of valley and rock which any stroll among the Alps will open to you, and they will appear poor shrivelled things, alike feeble in conception and tame in execution. In the course of our wanderings we have seen well-nigh all the painted canvas in Europe—we have seen at least specimens of the best of it; but never on canvas saw we scene like this. Raphael's pencil has left

none such. The glories of the Vatican cannot vie with the living glories of the Vaudois' Alps. The touches of the greatest genius are cold, and his invention is dull, compared with the bold, rich, fresh conceptions of Nature, and the style of boundless freedom and stupendous magnitude in which she executes them. And then, how prodigal of her gift! She pours her wonders forth with a profusion that bespeaks a wealth that is infinite—a power that fears no exhaustion!

And then, how eternal is the memory of such scenes! Let the man who has visited all the galleries of Europe say how much, of all that he has seen on canvas or in marble, he vividly remembers. A few, a very few scenes—some half-dozen it may be—and these how dim and indistinct! But the pictures gathered from nature and garnered in the mind, never die—scarce even do they grow dim; they live on and on with the man, a vision of real unfading glory. Who that has seen Mont Blanc, with the hues of sunset on his snows, or Monte Rosa, with the flush of dawn on its top, or the needles of the Furca, or the Lake of Lucerne, or the queenly beauty of Venice, or the ghastly grandeur of Rome, or the empurpled glory of the

Apennines, or the outspread majesty of the Mediterranean, ever forgets them? Such cannot be forgotten. And he who hath traversed such scenes with due appreciation—not the man who has lived in galleries—has within him, locked in the chambers of memory, a gallery of the grandest scenery; and whensoever he listeth he can open the door of that inner cabinet, and in fancy regale himself with a stroll amid the green meadows and crystal waters of the quiet vale, or on through the darkening shadows of the rifted gorge, or upwards to where the glacier hangs its frozen billows in mid air, and the flaming peak, rising sublime where human foot never trod, cleaves the ebon of the firmament!

## CHAPTER X.

*Valley of Rora.*

Evil Habit of Looking at the Past—Better Things in the Future—Cup-like Form of Rora—The Mantle of Monte Viso—The Revelation—Village of Rora—Temple of Rora—The One Mediator—Mass-house in Rora—Valley of Rora described—Its Grandeur and Beauty—The Waldenses content to be not a Nation, but a Church—Their sorely-tried Loyalty.

WE have looked long enough behind; let us now turn our face towards that to which we go. It is an evil habit, in truth, and one easily acquired, of dwelling perpetually on the past, and ever heaving the sigh over what we leave. There are greater things before us than any that lie behind. It clips the wings of effort not to believe so. The man that stands ever with averted face, who cannot see in the future worthier achievements than anything he may have accomplished in bygone days, has already done all he ever will do—he has got, in fact, to his life's end. He becomes immoveable as a post, and

is apt to be jostled by others somewhat roughly, and bidden stand out of their way.

And so, too, it happens to Churches that have no eye but for former attainments. They infallibly stereotype themselves. They stand gazing on the past till they themselves become part of it. Instead of a living organism, moving onwards, fighting new battles, occupying new territories, such a Church becomes a petrification. It stands rivetted to the spot like the famous old pillar of salt, and, like it, gets incrustated all over with thorny notions and carbuncly prejudices. Such have their use, no doubt, but it is the humble one of the beacon that but serves to shew how fast and how far the tide has gone beyond them. Yes, "Excelsior" is a grand motto, whether for the individual or for the race. Let the world write "Excelsior" on its banner. There awaits it in the future a higher literature, a nobler art, a truer philosophy, a form of government more free, than any that past ages can shew. Let the Church write "Excelsior" upon her banner. There lie fairer scenes upon her opening path—more love, more union, more spirituality—than any that are to be found upon her past track. He is not man that He should lie who

hath said, "I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." Let the Christian, especially, write "Excelsior" upon his banner. We know one who did: "I forget what is behind, I reach forth to what is before." And can what is "behind" the Christian be at all compared with what is "before" him? What the Christian leaves is, at the best, mixed; but "the eye hath not seen, the ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive" that to which he goes. Well, then, may he emblazon "Excelsior" on his banner. Onward! onward along the rough road—onward through the defile's black glooms—onward to where yon dawning glory bespeaks a sun that suffers no eclipse, and knows no setting. Listen to these noble strains, not the less true that they are heard to issue from the depth of those black gorges—black as hell itself—through which that true Christian and noble poet, Cowper, passed—

"Hope, with uplifted foot, set free from earth,  
Pants for the place of her ethereal birth;  
On steady wings sails through the immense abyss,  
Plucks amaranthine joys from bowers of bliss,  
And crowns the soul, while yet a mourner here,  
With wreaths like those triumphant spirits wear."

We now turn to the Valley of Rora, which lies, like a vast cup of verdure and foliage, among the Alps. We stand on the rim of the cup. Its beauty lies too far down to be here visible. All we can see, as yet, is a vast hollow, confusedly clad with rocks and great trees. Right across, swelling upwards in tremendous ridges, which tower high above the farther rim of the valley, is a magnificent array of mountains. Among these is or ought to be conspicuous Monte Viso. How brave a sight it were here to see his peak of glittering silver aloft in the azure of the firmament; but at this moment the feet of the giant only are visible. Dark clouds veil his head. Alas! we have no charm that can rend that curtain—no talisman that can compel the glory within it to come forth and reveal itself.

But lo! the breeze stirs the clouds! They rise, they part; another moment and the mighty form which that cloud curtains will be seen in open glory in the heavens. But no! The clouds fall again—the white mist comes lower upon the mountain than ever—it descends, in whirling fitful wreaths, to the rich woods that clothe its middle regions. But observe what is going on on the mountain's summit. See how the clouds are being

piled up, one above another. What an inky hue they wear. Bigger and blacker they grow, with their edgings of bronze. We shall have the burst immediately. Then how the lightnings will gleam in that dark sky, and the thunders re-echo amid these summits! We look around for some rock or tree which may afford us shelter from the blast. But what ails the monarch of the Cottian Alps? Why is he in so wrathful a mood to-day? And why should he buffet with his arrows the quiet vale that nestles so sweetly at his feet, and looks so confidently up to him?

But no; the tempest breaks not. The cloud rises once more. It moves slowly up the mountain, and, as fold after fold is lifted, farms and farm-houses, pine-forest, misty vale, and craggy peak come again into view. Light returns to the sky, and the darkness that had wrapt the valley is dispelled. And lo! transporting sight! the cloud is rent, not partially this time, but wholly, and there, between its riven masses, stands Monte Viso, in flashing light, calm and unchanged amid the changeful elements around him, his cone of glittering snows sharply cutting the sky's deep azure.



“ Around thee and above,  
Deep is the air, and dark, substantial, black ;  
An ebon mass : methinks thou piercest it  
As with a wedge ! But when I look again,  
It is thine own calm home, thy crystal shrine,  
Thy habitation from eternity.”

While that object is before you, you have eyes for nothing else. In vain Rora, with its romantic beauty, woos you to descend : in vain other peaks, only less sublime than Monte Viso itself, strive to attract your notice. You can gaze only on this supreme spectacle. But while you gaze the scene changes. The clouds shift. A wreath of mist stretches along upon the mountain's breast, and cuts off the top of Monte Viso from its base ; and now the sublime peak seems to float in mid-heaven. It looks no more a thing of earth. It is a glory celestial. When the great white throne shall at last be set in that sky, will it be more resplendent ? But the sight is short-lived. Again, the clouds close upon the flashing splendour. Monte Viso is gone : and where it stood there now rolls a sea of dull, cold vapour. The sight has burst so suddenly upon you, and as suddenly vanished, that you are left in a muse whether what you have seen was a vision or a reality.

Now our attention is set free, and we are left at liberty to think of the Valley of Rora, which lies sleeping in beauty at our feet. We begin the descent. The path zigzags down the hill-side. It is a mere footpath, running betwixt walls of mica slate, not more than a foot and a half in height. It is strewn with stones and debris, and looks like what it is, the channel of a torrent when the winter rains fall. It goes winding along, leading now over delicious clover meads, now past the very threshold of châteaux and farm-houses, and now through groves of apple and walnut trees. We have seen our last, we fear, of Monte Viso for the day. The clouds rest immoveably on his summit, but they are taking off in other quarters of the sky, and bursts of sunlight are flecking the valley below us.

A descent of about a quarter of an hour brings you to the village of Rora, which is hung, like an eagle's nest, on almost the very crest of the mountain. As first seen it is a small clump of brown roofs, a little distance below you, embowered in fruit trees. Following the path you are led right on upon the esplanade in front of the church of Rora. You have here one of the most commanding of all the many commanding views of the valley.

The church or temple is a neat edifice. Its front is in the Grecian style—four pilasters supporting an entablature, on which is written, “This is the house of God;” and below, “There is one God and one Mediator.” “One Mediator;” there is the whole gospel in a single phrase. There is wrapt up in two words the whole creed of the Vaudois Church. The grand truth to which the Old Testament Church bore testimony was “One God.” The grand truth to which the New Testament Church bears witness is “One Mediator.” The form which ancient idolatry took was a plurality of gods. The form which modern idolatry has taken is a plurality of mediators. Against that fatal error the Vaudois testimony was specially and unvaryingly pointed. In that sky over us there are many summits, but only one Monte Viso. In heaven there are powers and principalities, but only one Mediator. His function and dignity are supreme and alone. And just as the splendour of Monte Viso, like a veil, hides all the other summits that stand around him, so stands our Great High Priest, pre-eminent and supreme amid the thrones and dominions of the upper world. They have no glory by reason of Him that excelleth.

Through that High Priest has the worship of the Waldensian Church been all along offered. This it was that awoke against her the ire of Rome. The Waldensian Church, in bowing before the one Mediator, repudiated and condemned the crowd of intercessors that Rome had placed around the throne of God. And because she adhered to this testimony, and refused to bow at the shrine of saint or angel—refused to worship the calves which Rome had set up—her blood was poured out like water, and in few spots more abundantly than in this same Valley of Rora.

Looking westward you see the Popish chapel. It is a rather conspicuous building, covered with whitewash, and having a huge black cross painted on its gable. The Papists have made it a point of honour to build a mass-house in each valley; and though their congregation generally is but a mere handful, and that handful made up of strangers, in point of worldly circumstances but little above beggary, they account it a triumph in its way to be able to sing mass on such a soil. In the case of Rora the whole village lies betwixt the two churches, for the Romanist chapel stands at the one extremity, and the Waldensian temple at the other,

and thereby hangs a tale. In other days the inhabitants of Rora worshipped in an old dilapidated edifice that stood near the building with the black cross. There was less spiritual life among the Waldenses then than now, and they accounted themselves too poor to build a new church. They might have been worshipping in the ruinous fabric to this day had not the curé taken it into his head, in his own way, to assist them to a better. He complained to the authorities at Turin that his flock was disturbed by the psalms of the heretics, and procured an edict giving them leave to meet only at so early an hour of the morning as was tantamount to a prohibition of their meeting altogether. The people were roused, money poured in, and a new and commodious temple arose on this site, which is one of the noblest in all their valleys.

The grandeur of Rora, as seen from the esplanade before the church, transcends description. The cup-like form of the valley comes here fully out. You stand with your face to the south-west. Below you is an unbroken expanse of fruit trees covering the bottom of the valley. Breaking through their foliage are gleams of green mead, of

brown chalet, of golden maize, and other productions that cover their terraces. From the bottom the eye wanders to the rim, which, formed here of green summit, and there of dark craggy peak, sweeps round you like a vast wall of circumvallation. The eye searches all round for a way of exit, but in vain. The Alps have shut you in.

Nobler amphitheatre there is not in the Alps. Mark, on the right, how the slope runs up in a mighty circular wall, girdled with belts of forest trees, and hung to its very crest with rows of chalets, orchards, stripes of pasturage, and corn land, like seats in a theatre, rising, row on row, from floor to ceiling. You see that enormous rock that shoots up amidst these woods on the slope. What a magnificent monolith! Were it on the plain it would seem a mountain of itself. Were it set down in the valley of the Nile it might be taken for one of the pyramids. Near it rises another, only less huge. These are the cliffs of La Bric and Rocca-rossa. Truly welcome was their shelter in those days when fiercer tempests than those of the sky ravaged the Vale of Rora. Often have they received on their friendly sides the bullets meant for the persecuted Vaudois. They still linger here,

stern and gray, like old warriors who have tales to tell of peril and battle of other days.

If all is luxuriance below, rich, overflowing beauty—all is grandeur, naked, towering grandeur, above. Piles of crags, torn summits, snowy peaks, inclose the vale with a wall of glory. The mountains are cleft with gorges filled with a misty light, with the gleam of torrent and the sombre grandeur of pine forest shining through. Over these far retreating ravines, like a tremendous wave on the point of breaking, the mountain hangs its wiry curling ridge. Visible from the platform before the church, when the sky is perfectly clear, and forming the crowning glory of the scene, is Monte Viso, standing up in pale silver against the deep blue sky.

But this quiet vale has given birth to heroes, and it is time that we should introduce our readers to some of these. But let us first offer one remark on the singular history of the people of the Valleys. It never occurred to them to select a native prince and form themselves into an independent nation. Had they found a man of suitable abilities to train them to arms, and, when danger approached, to summon them into the field and concentrate their

efforts against the foe, we are inclined to think that their temporal condition would have been a happier one. Instead of enduring almost perpetual oppression and massacre at the hands of France and Savoy, they might have made themselves the terror of these powers. But they were content all along to be, not a nation, but a Church—a Presbyterian Church.

They could have found, had they wished it, ample reason to break for ever with the princes of Piedmont. A cruel and bloody lord had the Waldenses found in the House of Savoy. The avowed policy of that house was the extirpation of the Waldensian race; and to accomplish this no means were neglected, however dishonourable and however cruel. It mattered not that the rights of the Vaudois were secured by treaty, oft and solemnly ratified; these treaties were disregarded. It mattered not that the faith and honour of princes had been pledged to them by oath; these oaths were violated. The basest artifice, the profoundest dissimulation, were resorted to to effect their ruin. Force was employed. Bands of robbers and murderers (for what else were the armies sent against them?) were hired to pillage and burn, to torture



and murder the poor unoffending Waldenses. Such was the treatment, varied by a few brief seasons of respite, which they experienced, for five long centuries, from the House of Savoy. We search the history of the world in vain for another series of tragedies equally terrible and as long continued. Not so bloody were the oppressions of the Jews by the Seleucidæ, not so barbarous were the persecutions of the early Christians by the Roman emperors. What claim, then, had the Dukes of Savoy upon the allegiance of the Waldenses? Did not obedience seem a crime, rebellion a duty? And yet although the Waldenses, when attacked, stood to their rights, and repelled force by force, ever, when the conflict closed, did they promptly return to their ancient allegiance.

We know of nothing to equal this save the attachment of the Scottish Covenanters to the House of Stuart. How far either or both would have been justified in declaring that, seeing their sovereigns had ceased to fulfil to them any one end of their office, they had *ipso facto* fallen from that office, we do not pretend to determine. Neither proceeded this length. The special offence charged against both was disloyalty. History, so far from

countenancing the charge, shews that both carried their loyalty to a chivalrous, we do not say faulty, length. But it is not unimportant to notice that this coincides with the character and position predicted of them. Prophecy, as we read it, had assigned to them a character strictly ecclesiastical. They were the *remnant of the woman's seed*, the *two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth*, the *two witnesses*. And, dissociated thus, the gospel's power was the better seen. It was to them instead of all other helps—instead of political organisation, instead of military training, instead of renown, of wealth, of glory. While the nations on the plains of Italy, with all these advantages, sank down into serfdom, the Waldenses remained free. The gospel made them, of simple peasants and herdsmen, heroes and patriots, and endued them with a life which five centuries of wars, and massacres, and woes could not extinguish.

## CHAPTER XI.

*Valley of Rora—Janavel and his Exploits.*

**Janavel—His Character—First Assault of the Marquis di Pianezza—Janavel and his Little Band—Their Heroic Defence of their Valley—Falsehood of Pianezza—No Faith with Heretics—Pianezza's Second Attack and Repulse—A Third Attack—Bravely Repulsed by Janavel—Death of a Persecutor—Greater Preparations for War—Massacre and Pillage of Rora—Pianezza's Letter—Janavel's Heroic Reply—A Chosen Instrument.**

BUT from time to time among the Waldenses, as among the Jews of old, God raised up "mighty men of valour" to save His people. One of the most remarkable of these men was Janavel, commonly known as Captain Joshua Janavel, a native of this same Valley of Rora. From the accounts that have come down to us, he appears to have possessed all the qualities of a great military leader. He was a man of daring courage, of resolute purpose, and of venturous enterprise. He possessed the faculty, so essential in a commander, of mas-

terly arrangement and skilful combination. He was fertile in resource, self-possessed in emergencies, quick to resolve, and prompt to execute. His devotion and energy, under God, were the means of mitigating somewhat the horrors of the massacre of 1655, and his heroism ultimately rolled back the tide of that great calamity, and made it recoil upon its authors. His name, while he lived, was a tower of strength to the Waldenses and a sound of terror to their foes.

The feats of valour performed by this man would fill a volume. It is only a passing notice that we can bestow upon his achievements. It was the morning of the 24th of April 1655, and this day was to commence a massacre which was destined to fill the Valleys with lamentation and woe, and to darken history with one of the blackest tragedies which its pages record. Five hundred ruffians were despatched by the Marquis di Pianezza to the Valley of Rora, to massacre in cold blood its peaceful, unoffending, and unsuspecting inhabitants. Ascending from the Valley of the Pelice, by much the same path as that by which we have now conducted the reader, they had gained the summit of the hill, and were already descending on the village

of Rora, stealthily and swiftly, as a band of wolves might descend upon a sheepfold. Janavel, who had known weeks before that a storm was gathering, though he knew not when or where it would burst, was on the watch. He espied the troop, and truly guessed their errand. There was no time to be lost; a few minutes longer and not a man would be alive in Rora to carry tidings to the next commune of what had befallen it. What was to be done? Could Janavel, single-handed and alone, attack an army of five hundred men? Would not that be madness? The hero-peasant of Rora did dare attack them. Janavel ascended the hill under shelter of its rocks and foliage; and on his way he induced six other peasants, as brave as himself, to join him. This heroic little band marched on till they were near the troop, then, hiding amid the bushes, they lay in ambush by the side of the path. The assailants came on, little suspecting the trap into which they were marching. Janavel and his men fired, and with so unerring an aim, that the foremost six soldiers fell dead. Reloading their pieces, and dexterously changing their position, they fired again, and with like effect: another little heap of slain blocked up

the path. The attack was unexpected, the foe was invisible, their numbers the soldiers had no means of ascertaining, and their frightened imaginations multiplied them tenfold. Pianezza's troops began now to retreat, but Janavel and his men, bounding from cover to cover, like so many chamois, hung upon their rear, and did deadly execution with their bullets. The foe gave way to panic and disorder, and, rushing down the mountain, were chased ignominiously from the Valley of Rora by these seven peasants. They left fifty-four of their number dead behind them.

The inhabitants of Rora repaired to Pianezza that afternoon. Ignorant of the massacres perpetrated by the soldiers of that very man that very day in several of the valleys of their brethren, they addressed him, partly apologising and partly remonstrating. "Those who invaded your valley," said Pianezza, "were a band of lawless banditti. You did right to repel them. Go back to your families, and fear nothing. I pledge my word and honour that no evil shall happen to you." With this artful answer the poor people were sent home.

Janavel was not the man to be imposed upon by these deceitful words. Scarce had the morning

of the next day broke before he was abroad, scanning with eagle eye the mountain paths which led into his valley. But had not the Marquis di Pianezza, but the evening before, given his solemn promise that Rora should suffer no harm? True; but that promise had been given to heretics, whose utter extirpation had been resolved upon by the Council of the Propagation of the Faith, then sitting in Turin. And if any one wishes to know how much that promise was worth, he may consult the sixteenth canon of the third Lateran Council, admitted by Papists to be infallible, and the decree of the Council of Constance in 1414, which, confirmed by the Council of Trent, and never repealed, runs thus: "By no law, natural or divine, is it obligatory to keep faith with heretics, to the prejudice of the Catholic faith."

A short time only elapsed before the suspicions of Janavel were more than justified. Six hundred men-at-arms, the flower of Pianezza's army, and chosen with special reference to this enterprise of hazard, were seen ascending the mountain Cassulet to attack Rora. Janavel had already mustered a little host of twelve peasants, stout of heart like himself, armed with muskets, and six others pro-

vided with slings, eighteen in all. Dividing his followers into three companies of six men each, giving two slingers to each company, he posted one in front of the advancing host, and appointed the other two to lie in ambush by the side of the path. The enemy marched into the trap. Every bullet and stone did its work. A strange terror seized the soldiers; and a second ignominious and disastrous retreat rid the Valley of Rora once more of these murderers.

The Marquis di Pianezza, the miserable tool of the Council of the Propagation of the Faith, renewed his promises in the evening, and his attack next morning. This time a more numerous host, somewhere about a thousand men, was sent against the Valley of Rora. They seized the avenues leading into it; and, the inhabitants having fled to the caves of Monte Friolante, they burned their houses and carried off their cattle. The soldiers were ascending the hill that divides the Valley of Rora from that of the Pelice, when Janavel, seeing them encumbered with booty, judged this the favourable moment to fall upon them. On his knees, before his heroic little troop, he gave thanks to God, who had twice, by his hand, delivered His people, pray-



ing that God would anew fill with courage the hearts of his followers, and enable them to triumph yet again over their enemies. The hero then attacked the retreating host with his wonted bravery and his former remarkable success. Panic seized them. They left their booty. A shower of bullets and great rocks pursued them down the steeps. Numbers were slain, and the rest escaped to Villaro.

The Marquis di Pianezza, instead of seeing in these events the finger of God, was only the more inflamed with rage, and the more resolutely set on the extirpation of every heretic from the Valley of Rora. Assembling from various points a yet more numerous army than the former, he gave orders for a fourth attack on this mountain fortress. But the invaders were destined to recoil once more from the shock of its heroic defenders. They fled precipitately, pursued not so much by the sword of Janavel as by the mysterious terror that now, as so often before, fell upon them, and falling over the precipices, they were dashed in pieces on the rocks below. The invaders on this occasion were composed mostly of Irish, who had been banished by Cromwell for the share they had had in the memorable massacre in their own country, and who met

here the death they had inflicted on others in a distant land. The fate of their leader, one Mario, a man noted for his ferocity, deserves notice. Falling headlong over the rocks into the stream, he was badly bruised, and being drawn out and carried to Luserna, he died there two days after, in dreadful torments of mind and body, much burdened in conscience with the churches he had burned and the blood he had shed, and crying out that he felt the fires of hell already beginning to burn within him.

The Marquis di Pianezza might now have seen, one should think, that he was fighting against God, and have desisted from the conflict. Though waged only with herdsmen, it had brought him nothing but disgrace, and the loss of his bravest soldiers. Victor Amadeus was once heard to say that "the skin of every Vaudois cost him fifteen of his best Piedmontese soldiers." Pianezza's experience went yet higher. Already he had lost hundreds, but not one of Janavel's little troop, dead or alive, had he been able to get into his hands. But so far from discontinuing the war, he resolved to prosecute it with greater vigour, and on a larger scale; and it pleased God for a little while to grant him success. New levies were raised;

an army of ten thousand men were thrown like an avalanche upon the little commune of Rora. Against odds so tremendous Janavel and his company, however brave, could avail nothing. While he and his men were bravely combating at one point, the enemy entered at another. But who shall describe the horrors that followed? Blood, burning, and rapine overwhelmed the little community. No distinction was made of age or sex. None had pity for their tender years—none had reverence for their gray hairs. Happy they who were slain at once. Those to whom it pleased not their persecutors to accord this enviable lot had to endure the most horrible torments, and the most shameful indignities, before expiring. The few who were spared were carried captive, and among these were the wife and the three daughters of Janavel. The wife and daughters were preserved alive, we may be sure, only to give the tyrant Pianeza a stronger hold over the father. But the tyrant could ill take the measure of the hero! Janavel had now nothing more for which to combat in the Valley of Rora: the light of his hearth was quenched; his village was a heap of smoking ruins; his fathers and brethren had fallen by the

sword or were captives,—but the cause of his Church and people still needed his aid, and, rising superior to these accumulated calamities, he marched his heroic band over the mountains to Villaro, there to await what further opportunities Providence might give him of wielding his sword in defence of the ancient liberties and the glorious faith of his people.

It was at this period that Pianezza, believing that he had now the hero of Rora completely in his power, addressed to Janavel the following letter, than which nothing more brutal, nothing more cowardly, was ever, perhaps, penned:—"I exhort you for the last time," wrote Pianezza, "to renounce your heresy. This is your only hope of obtaining the pardon of your prince, and of saving the life of your wife and daughters, now my prisoners, and whom, if you continue obstinate, I will burn alive. As for yourself, my soldiers shall no longer pursue you, but I will set such a price upon your head, as that, were you Beelzebub himself, you shall infallibly be taken; and be assured that, if you fall alive into my hands, there are no torments with which I will not punish your rebellion."

How refined the cruelty ! The wife and daughters of Janavel stood at the fiery stake. A word from Janavel would have unloosed their chain ; but that word would have stamped him as a traitor to his country, and an apostate from his Saviour, and therefore, though the heart of the husband and father was as tender as that of the hero was brave, that word he dared not speak. Could he have redeemed them from the fire by the sacrifice of his own life, most joyfully would he have gone to the stake ; but what the tyrant demanded as their ransom was not the life of the body but the life of the soul : he was asked to betray his Saviour. We read of some noble women of old who " were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." And we know that among this number we may rank the wife of Janavel. A release, purchased by such a concession as the tyrant demanded, she would have accounted a thousand times more bitter than the most dreadful death. No ! Janavel hesitated not. His reply was prompt, and it was magnanimous as prompt. He wrote as follows :—" There are no torments so terrible, no death so barbarous, that I would not choose rather than deny my Saviour. Your threats

cannot cause me to renounce my faith; they but fortify me in it. Should the Marquis di Pianezza cause my wife and daughters to pass through the fire, it can but consume their mortal bodies; their souls I commend to God, trusting that He will have mercy on them, and on mine, should it please Him that I fall into the Marquis's hands."

This Pianezza, no doubt, felt as the most mortifying defeat he had ever experienced at the hands of the hero-peasant of Rora. What could all his power effect against a man animated by a soul like this? And what could all his power effect against a cause which could infuse such a spirit into its adherents? He might muster armies; he might erect gibbets; he might shed blood in oceans; but of what avail? He could no more crush a cause like this by means like these than he could pluck the Alps from their firm foundations. "This Christian and magnanimous reply," observes Leger, "certified Captain Janavel as a chosen instrument in the hands of God for the defence of His cause, the preservation and comfort of His poor persecuted remnant; and also, as will appear in the sequel, for the recovery of his country, seemingly totally lost."

## CHAPTER XII.

*Exploits of Janauel and Jahier.*

**JANAUEL renews the War—Is joined by Jahier—Five Hundred against Fifteen Thousand—Valour and Success of the Waldenses—Horror caused by Tidings of the Massacre—Interposition of England—The Two Patriots—Their Reward—Hamlet of Rora—Interior of its Houses—Cottage of Janauel—The Chestnut Tree—Rocks—The Torrent—Natural Escarpments—Bar of Rora—Nooks unknown to Fame—Popish Town of Luserna.**

JANAUEL had saved from the wreck of his family his infant son; and his first care was to seek a place of safety for him. Laying him on his shoulders, he passed the frozen Alps which separate the Valley of Luserna from France, and entrusted the child to the care of a relative resident at Queyras, in the Valleys of the French Protestants. With the child he carried thither the tidings of the awful massacre of his people. Indignation was roused. Not a few were willing to join his standard, brave spirits like himself; and with his little band greatly

recruited, he repassed the Alps in a few weeks to begin his second and more successful campaign. On his arrival in the Valleys he was joined by Jahier, under whom a troop had been collecting to avenge the massacre of their brethren.

In Jahier, Janavel had found a companion worthy of himself, and worthy of the cause for which he was now in arms. Of this heroic man Leger has recorded, that, "though he possessed the courage of a lion, he was as humble as a lamb, always giving to God the glory of his victories; well versed in Scripture, and understanding controversy, and of great natural talent." The massacre had reduced the Vaudois race to all but utter extermination; and five hundred men were all that the two leaders could collect around their standard. The army opposed to them, and now in their Valleys, was from 15,000 to 20,000 strong, consisting of trained and picked soldiers. Nothing but an impulse from the God of battles could have moved these two men, with such a handful, to take the field against such odds. To the eye of a common hero all would have seemed lost. But their courage was based on faith. They knew that it was impossible that God would permit His cause to perish, or the lamp of



the Valleys to be extinguished; and, few though they were, they believed that God was able, by their humble instrumentality, to save their country and Church. Seeing Him who is invisible, and fearing not the wrath of the king, they unsheathed the sword, and so valiantly did they wield it, that soon that sword became the terror of the Piedmontese armies. The ancient promise was fulfilled, "The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits."

We cannot go into details. Prodiges of valour were performed by this little host. "I had always considered the Vaudois to be men," said Descombies, who had now joined them, "but I have found them lions." Nothing could withstand the fury of their attack. Post after post, and village after village, was wrested from the Piedmontese troops. Soon the enemy was driven from their upper valleys. The war now passed down into the plain, and there it was waged with the same heroism and success. They besieged and took several towns; they fought not a few pitched battles. In these actions they were almost always victorious, though opposed by more than ten times their number. Their success could scarce be credited, had it not

been recorded by historians whose veracity is above suspicion, and the accuracy of whose statements was attested by eye-witnesses. Not unfrequently did it happen, at the close of a day's fighting, that 1400 Piedmontese dead covered the field of battle, while not more than six or seven of the Waldenses had fallen. Such success might well be termed miraculous; and not only did it appear so to the Vaudois themselves, but even to their foes, who could not refrain from expressing their conviction that "surely God was on the side of the Barbets."

While the Vaudois were thus heroically maintaining their cause by arms, and rolling back the chastisement of war on those from whom its miseries had come, tidings of their wrongs were travelling to all the Protestant States of Europe. Wherever these tidings came a feeling of intense and unmitigated horror was evoked. The cruelty of the Government of Savoy was universally and loudly execrated. All confessed that such a tale of woe they had never before heard. But the Protestant States did not content themselves with simply condemning these deeds; they judged that duty called upon them to move in behalf of this poor oppressed people; and, foremost among those

who did themselves lasting honour by interposing their power in behalf of a people "drawn unto death, and ready to perish," was England, then under the protectorate of Cromwell.

"The tyrant of the Chersonese  
Was freedom's best and bravest friend.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Oh that the present hour would lend  
Another despot of the kind!  
Such chains as his were sure to bind."

The result of this united mediation was a cessation of the open hostilities and persecutions of the court of Turin, or rather of the agents of Rome, and a peace to "the Valleys," which began again to lift up their head and bloom afresh after the tempest had passed which had burst upon them in such sudden and devastating fury.

Before dismissing this page of Vaudois history, so dark and melancholy were it not for the gleams of valour and patriotism with which it is irradiated, we must be permitted a parting word regarding those two brave soldiers and true Christian men who so nobly stemmed the tide at this disastrous era of their country. Janavel and Jahier, as heroes, are not less great than the greatest of the heroes of classic antiquity.

"Methinks their very names shine still and bright;  
Apart, like glow-worms on a summer night,

Or lonely tapers, when from far they fling  
A guiding ray ; or seen, like stars on high."

But it is as patriots that they chiefly challenge our admiration. It was no thirst of glory, no hope of reward, but a pure love of God and of country that moved them to the performance of their great deeds.

Had these deeds been performed on the soil of Rome, crowns would have been voted in their honour, lays would have been written in their praise, and monuments would have risen to their memory. But we know not if even tombstone or memorial of any sort marks the spot where sleeps the heroic dust of Janavel and Jahier. But we must not suppose, therefore, that they are forgotten by those they saved. In the Valleys we often heard their names mentioned with the admiration which we accord to the hero, and the reverence which is due to the martyr. The eloquent Leger has recorded their achievements, and wherever the gospel is known, there will it be told what great things these men did for it in evil days. Nor is He to whom this service was rendered unjust to forget it. A mortal crown they cared not to wear, an immortal they now inherit. Let us then inscribe the names of Janavel and Jahier beside those of Ge-

deon and Barak, and Samson and Jephtha, on the same roll, as men of whom it may be truly said, that through faith they "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." And should evil days come round, let us recall the example of these men, and that of our own worthies, and be animated thereby to display the same heroic devotion to the cause of truth.

"The blood of Vane,  
His prison pain  
Who traced the path the pilgrim trod;  
And hers whose faith  
Drew strength from death,  
And pray'd her Russell up to God;

"Your shadows rend,  
And o'er us bend,  
O martyrs, with your crowns and palms;  
Breathe through these throngs  
Your battle songs,  
Your scaffold prayers, and dungeon psalms."

We had forgotten the grandeur of Rora in the yet greater grandeur of the exploits of which it has been the scene. We were standing on the esplanade of the church, entranced by the valley that

lies sleeping, in most luxuriant beauty, within its lofty wall of pinnacle and summit. Now, let us down. We thread our way through Rora. It is a little hamlet of some forty houses, hanging on the mountain, amid masses of verdure and clouds of foliage. Picturesque it is, if you take it as a whole, and at a little distance ; but separate its component items, and it is humble enough. The walls of its houses are of mica slate : they are low and gray, and yield but a tottering support, in some cases, to the great brown roofs that are imposed upon them, with their great overlapping eaves. There is no stir in the little place. A few children are playing in the street. Their fathers and mothers are in the fields. You see them digging in the terraces, or carrying great bundles of grass in the chestnut groves. The interior of these châteaux discovers at a glance the severe simplicity of life which is practised in the Valley of Rora. After a few minutes' pause, to let the duskiess clear up, felt on passing from the intense sunlight without, you find yourself standing on a floor of earth, within walls, which, only in some instances, have a coating of plaster, and a few of the most necessary articles of furniture, in the very plainest style, around you. There is a

long form for a seat, and, it may be, a few deal chairs: a few dairy utensils, a broad flat box, replenished with mountain grass and a blanket or two, a hearth of ample dimensions, on which, at meal-time, are piled a few faggots, and sometimes, not always, an open chimney for the escape of the smoke, make up the picture of the interior. Little encouragement was there in the Valleys to erect fine mansions, which the first burst of bigotry (and no one knew how soon it might come) would level with the ground, or to accumulate elegant furniture, which might soon have to be left for the mountain cave. In summer, the villagers are so seldom within, and the cooking is so extremely simple, that fire is but rarely kindled, and where there is no chimney the inmates can afford to let the smoke find its own way and take its own time of exit. In winter, during the severity of the cold, its presence is rather comfortable than otherwise. We must add, however, that the superiority of the Waldenses to the surrounding mountaineers, in both the comforts and the cleanliness of their homes, all who have had an opportunity of making the comparison will at once and most fully acknowledge.

In Rora the inhabitants still shew the cottage of

Janavel. It is two hundred years since his exploits were performed, but tradition asserts that the existing walls and roof are the same that lodged the hero. Its low entrance, and its wall bending towards earth, seem to confirm this assertion. It differs in no respect from the fabrics around it. The saviour of his country was just as homely lodged as the poorest herdsman in all the Valley of Rora. This simplicity reminds us of Scriptural times, when God chose His "judges" from the husbandmen of Mount Ephraim and the shepherds of Mount Gilead, and His "prophets" from the herdmen of Tekoa and the gatherers of sycamore fruit. Did Janavel, after fighting his great battles, and making his name a terror to his people's enemies, return to his flocks and his chestnut trees in the Valley of Rora? If he did, it was only for the briefest space. He had been too much the patriot ever to be forgiven by the House of Savoy. He was exempted from the deed of amnesty now passed, and sent into exile at Geneva, where we shall again meet him.

Below the village the path gets broader. It is still, however, but a mule track, and is rough as ever. Hard to the foot are these zigzags which



lead you down the mountain, but the chestnut, which here attains a majestic stature, mindful of the traveller's comfort, stretches its great leafy arms across the path. Mark that noble tree! What a pillar-like stem! What a cloud of foliage it hangs upon the mountain's side! It looks a very nursing mother, with its great outstretched arms, and its vast hoard of nuts, which it treasures up, waiting till mellow autumn shall have ripened them, when it will rain them by myriads into the lap of Vaudois, as yonder cloud rains its showers into the green lap of the valley.

At every five hundred feet or so of the descent the character of the valley undergoes a change. Now its cup-like form is lost. The hills which, viewed from the elevation of the village, seemed to form a ring of peaks, begin to draw away from each other, and noble ravines open to the eye, right and left, running far up into the mountains, rich in woods and orchards, and laced with long glittering lines of torrents.

A strange change, too, has the surface of the valley undergone. To the eye that looks down upon it from above, it appears a rich slope of wavy grass, and boughs leafy and blossoming; but

looking upward, it is seen bristling all over with jutting rocks and gray naked crags. This makes the valley look as infertile to the man who is ascending it from below, as it appears luxuriantly rich to the man who is coming down upon it from above. Yet have these rocks their uses—important and kindly uses. Great caverns yawn beneath them, where twos and threes, and in some cases, whole dozens, might hide from pursuit, or lie in ambush. The path leading down the mountain is skirted all throughout with such. Who knows but there, in that cave, or behind that great rock, Janavel and his brave little band may have stood? When man's heart was a flint—harder than the rocky cliffs around—the mountain, tender and pitiful, opened its arms to shelter the poor hunted children of the Valley of Rora.

Sound in the valley there is none, save, as we near a chalet, the voices of children at play, breaking in soft sweet sounds, and ringing, in faint and yet fainter echoes, through that great whispering gallery. At times, too, there come, borne to the ear in faint, fitful gushes, the dash of the torrent, which sings all day long beneath these alder bushes and great walnut trees at the bottom, and which,

waxing louder and louder as we descend, seems to be hymning our welcome. So does Wisdom speak to man, striving to woo him, with her low quiet voice, from the world's storm-beaten heights down into the sheltered paths of peace.

Now our descent is accomplished. We stand on the banks of the torrent, which ploughs its way onward in narrow rocky bed, now dashing in spray from some projecting rock, now fretting itself against some great boulder, now falling in a sheet of crystal from some ledge, and now lying asleep in the black sullen pool, not there to be lost, but thence emerging, to flow onward, in company of the Pelice and the Po, to the ocean. How striking an image of man! He toils along in a narrow course, where cares fret, and difficulties thwart and obstruct him; at last he drops into the silent grave, not, however, to find there his final goal, but to emerge thence, and join the ocean of an eternal existence.

We can here better understand the conformation of the Valley of Rora, and the impregnable character of its entrance from below. We stand now at its gate, for here the basin-like valley contracts to a gorge; and so impracticable is that gorge that

an invading army must have found it about as difficult to force their way into the Valley of Rora as to ascend the narrow, beetling, craggy defiles of Angrogna itself. The path zigzags up the mountain on a series of hanging ledges, or galleries of rock. On this side is the precipice, which runs sheer down to the torrent; on that the cliff, which is hung in beetling masses above, grassy and wooded when once ascended, but offering, with its bare, unclothed face, no assistance to the climber. The path is so narrow that it can be gone by not more than two abreast. Every here and there the rock protrudes. No engineer in the world could have contrived it better for offering shelter to the defenders of the valley, and leaving utterly exposed its assailants. It reminds one of the path up to the famed fortress of Ehrenbreitstein; with this difference, that the projections and escarpments that there meet you every few paces, are diminutive, indeed, compared with the colossal escarpments and bastions which Omnipotence has reared up all along the approach to Rora.

The great capacity of the valley, too, here strikes one. It is no longer the mere cup: right and left, in fact all round, it is seen to send out great

branching arms, which run up among the mountains, and offer room and dwelling for multitudes. These are covered with the same productions as the parent valley—orchards, chestnut groves, and fine pasturages. In fact Rora is seen to be a congeries of valleys, having a common link or head in its central valley, and all reposing under the sheltering shadow of Monte Viso, which, like a bounteous parent, sends down his breezes to cool them, and pours forth for their refreshment, from his vaults of eternal ice, myriads of living torrents. The long narrow valley that leads out of Rora has a natural defence or bar, in the form of a vast projecting rock, where a handful of men could successfully contest the path against an army. At this point I saw signs of greater cultivation in former times than any that exists now. Nature mostly has terraced the mountains of the Vaudois, but here a series of stone terraces, built by man, rise upon the slope, covered only with grass, but in other days, doubtless, they were given to the vine or to grain crops, as they are everywhere else among these hills. It has struck me as possible, however, that as this part of the valley adjoins the Catholic town of Luserna, it may belong to Papists. I uniformly noticed a marked

difference betwixt those patches of territory which the Papists possess and the surrounding fields of the Vaudois. The one is a garden running over with flower and fruit, the other looks like a bit of the desert pieced into a richly cultivated field.

Arrived at the end of the long valley, you find yourself in a circular hollow, so exquisitely sweet that it might have sat for its portrait as the Happy Valley of Rasselas. After the darkness and ruggedness of the pass, it looks green and bright as emerald. Its stream turns a mill. A fine rich clover covers the ground; its trees rise laden with golden fruit; a little cluster of châteaux occupies the centre; all around is umbrageous wood that softens the dashing of the torrent; great crags, crowned with clumps of trees, look down upon you from a dizzy height; and afar, seen through the long perspective of the rifted precipices, and breaking in occasional flashes of glory from amidst the rolling clouds, is the snow-white summit of Monte Viso. It is one of those nooks of which the Alps are so full, which no pencil has ever portrayed or pen described, but which only the more fascinate you on that account, opening, as they do unexpectedly, in

all their virgin seclusion and freshness. Loath are you to quit such scenes.

Now step across the torrent, and cast a look back on the side from which you have just passed over. Did ever mortal man see a wall like that? What ideas of power—of everlasting and almighty strength—does that wall suggest! One gigantic layer of rock is piled upon another gigantic layer of rock, a third upon the second, and thus the series mounts up till the topmost seems to touch the arch of heaven. There is the golden cloud of eve dipping down upon its upper edge. You have read of the great stones in the wall of Baalbec, the fabled work of genii, but your utmost stretch of imagination can conceive of them but as pebbles compared with the gigantic blocks that compose this cyclopean rampart. Along its face run stretches of coppice. Great trees, casting anchor in its rents and fissures, wave upon it. Cottages peer out at its foot, scarce visible through their deep mantlings of vine and apple tree. Others, climbing to its very top, are perched in embowered and woody clefts, like the eagle's eyrie, and hold communion with the clouds as they roll downwards from the higher summits. On the other hand is

a fronting wall of similar cliffs, only not quite so colossal. You pass on through this magnificent natural corridor—and where, in palace or museum of all Europe, is there corridor like this—so vast and grand! At length an ample basin, having a girdling of wooded heights, and a rich intermixture of the purple grape, and the golden maize in the meadows that clothe its area, opens before you. On its further edge is the little Popish town of Luserna, where hosts so often mustered, in days of yore, to ravish the little valley from which we have just come.



## CHAPTER XIII.

Valley of *Luserna*.

**Brilliant Morning—Effect upon the Valley of Luserna—A Friend—Signification of the Names of the Valleys—Travelling *with* and *without* a Companion compared—New Church at La Torre—The College—Orphan Asylum and Hospital—General Beekwith, the “Benefactor of the Vaudois”—Fruitage of Luserna—Length of Valley—The Castelluzzo—Its many Tragic Memories.**

THE morning that succeeded the day of my exploration of Rora opened with unusual brilliancy. Fine weather seldom comes amiss. To the traveller it is always welcome; but to me it was doubly welcome this morning, inasmuch as it seemed to bring with it a promise of many such mornings, and a corresponding permission to explore the Valleys, of which I had, till now, stood somewhat in doubt. But how exhilarating the sunny air! The very mountains seemed to enjoy it, as they stood drinking it in. The same hills that, under cloud

and rain, seemed to droop and hang their crests as if suffering from a fit of nervous depression, were now radiant with very joy. They stood up taller, statelier, bolder, and filled the ebon o'erarching vault with a gorgeous array of silvery spires, glittering turrets, flaming domes, and structures of all shapes and colours, according as the golden light struck upon them. They looked the very image of a glorious battlemented city.

There are few spots which a fine morning will not improve. But perhaps there is no spot where fair weather works so marvellous a change as in the Valley of Luserna. Its scenery, solemn and grand, needs lighting up. Under cloud and tempest it has indeed a magnificence, but a magnificence of a sombre and dolorous kind. Its walls of black mountains, its ceiling of murky cloud, its windows of rifted gorges, barred with jutting crags, give it the look of a great prison. An abyss of mist and darkness yawns around you, which the imagination, aided by the howlings of the tempest and the frequent gleams of lightning, peoples with vague terrors. But chase away the cloud, and pour the sunlight into it, and the effect is magical. Instantly it is transformed into a theatre of gran-

deur. There rises a hall of celestial splendours where a prison stood. How sweetly the white-walled La Torre nestles at its entrance. How nobly rises the Castelluzzo, with a thin gauzy brilliance enrobing its naked stone. How sharply the mountainous ridge of the Vandalin cuts the azure. And then, looking towards the head of the valley, where the towering summit of the Col la Croix points the way to France, and overhangs a path which apostolic feet may oft have trodden, what an array of peaks rises upon the sight! what an assemblage of precipices meets the eye! opening their bosom to the morning's glory, and offering their stern tumultuous grandeur in strong contrast to the quiet vale below, with its robe of green and its torrent of silver.

But fair as the morning is, the face of friend is fairer still, and it was my lot that morning to have a friend look in upon me. I was at breakfast, and had just poured out my last cup of *café-au-lait*, when Dr Revel was announced. Dr Revel I was delighted to see. He had come but the evening before from Nice, where, as I have already said, he had been officiating for M. Pilatte, who was absent in Britain, and now he hastened kindly to

greet me. I had had the privilege of making his acquaintance in Scotland in 1851, but this was our first meeting in the Valleys of his fatherland. Dr Revel is well known to many friends in Great Britain, and it needs not that I speak his many excellences. His services to myself, rendered in a spirit of unaffected kindness and true genuine politeness, I shall never forget. As the former Moderator of the Waldensian Church, no one knew better than he the circumstances, feelings, and history, recent and more ancient, of the Waldensian body, or could more luminously state them. He was daily with me in my rambles, unless in those that lay beyond the Col Julien, beguiling the way with his intelligent talk, his quiet humour, and his scholarly observations. My obligations to him, on many points touching the present and past history of his Church, I shall afterwards have occasion to acknowledge. The evenings of my brief and happy sojourn were mostly passed at his house, in the society of himself and of his accomplished lady, Madame Revel. It is sweet to recall such in a distant land.

After a long conversation, I mentioned to Dr Revel that I had resolved to cross the Col Julien

that very day, and descend on the Valleys of Prali and San Martino. Dr Revel, having regard to the weather, strongly approved of my purpose. The mountain's summit, he said, was to-day remarkably clear, and I might reckon on making the passage without encountering any of those sudden storms, or yet more bewildering mists, which beset these hills. So in an hour or so we gave ourselves to the journey, Dr Revel going all the way with me to Bobbio, where the ascent of the Col Julien begins.

I do not intend to take the reader over the Col Julien just yet. He must first see the Valley of Luserna—the great trunk valley of the Waldenses. We have examined the valleys right and left of it—the dark and winding defiles of Angrogna on this side, the beauteous cup-like Rora on that; now let us up along the broad and sunny Luserna, which runs right out before us, cleaving the Alps in a mighty gorge, on both sides of which stand up the great mountains, forming walls of grandeur along the whole course of the valley to Bobbio, where it terminates amid the dark gorges and riven peaks that overhang the savage pass of Mirabouc. It reminds one of the cloven path by which the

Israelites marched through the Red Sea, where wave heaped upon wave, and crest towering above crest, flanked the tribes within ramparts of crystal. So are hung the mountains, summit on summit, crest above crest, over the deep meadow-clad bottom of the Val di Luserna.

Let me here remark, by the way, how much poetry there is in the very names of these valleys. Luserna signifies "the Valley of Light;" Rora, "the Valley of Dews;" Angrogna, "the Valley of Groans," from the echoing noise of its torrent amid its cliffs; Pomaretto, "the Valley of Apples;" Perosa, "the Valley of Flowers," and with these several names agree the physical characteristics of the Valleys. The rich fruitage of Rora attests that the dews of Monte Viso descend as copiously upon it as of old the dew of Hermon upon the hills of Zion. As regards Angrogna, it has resounded almost as ceaselessly with the groans of its people as with the echoes of its torrent. And not to speak of the gospel light, which has from immemorial times shone in the Valley of Luserna, its physical brilliancy is remarkable. The strong body of light which falls directly upon it from the firmament is increased by the reflection of its cliffs.

It looks as if a mighty illumination were about to burst forth from amidst its precipices.

I must also premise, that the picture I am now to put on paper of the Valley of Luserna is not the result of this morning's walk. I never could turn to much account, in this way, any journey gone in the society of a companion, however agreeable and congenial that companion might be. The presence of even a professional guide I felt to be an incumbrance, and never suffered his services but when these services were wholly indispensable. One may pick up the name of this mountain and of that river; he may be able to tell the number of miles betwixt village and village; he may recollect that here he had bad wine, and that there his arrival was greeted by a smiling host and sumptuous fare; the hard outlines of the landscape, the common incidents of the way, he may gather up, and describe in road-book fashion;—but if he aims at transferring to the tablets within the veritable landscape before him, with the air and light of heaven upon it, he must be at liberty to pause when he lists, and to let his thoughts range where they will. To walk over the scene is not enough; you must converse with it all the way. You must

get into its ever-varying moods and humours—you must gather up the hints which its quiet nooks and dells will be ever letting fall, and hear what its rocks, and streamlets, and hills have got to say. If you take to it alone, it will be as communicative as you please; if you admit a rival, it will become coy and distant that instant.

Immediately on emerging from the narrow street of La Torre, you find, on the right of the path, a raised platform, to which some half-dozen steps lead up. On that platform stands the new Protestant church of La Torre, erected in 1851. It is a large and elegant building, capable of accommodating some thousand or twelve hundred persons. Its white front, with its large oriel window, and its two flanking towers, is turned to the valley. Beyond it, on the same platform, is a row of substantial two-storey houses, with neat gardens in front. These are the professors' dwellings. On the left of the path, on the slopes that lead down to the Pelice, and embowered amid walnut and chestnut groves, stands the College. Its class-rooms are commodious—its library is well furnished with English as well as with continental works. It has a staff of ten professors. This machinery is some-



what beyond the necessities of the Valleys, but, besides furnishing teachers for their schools and pastors for their pulpits, the college educates missionaries for Piedmont and other parts of Italy. The course of study pursued within its walls embraces both the classics and theology. Formerly, the Waldensian pastors were educated at Geneva and Berlin; and, as was to be expected, the young men, on their return, were found sometimes to have imbibed the peculiar philosophy of these schools, and were disposed to blend the old theology of the Valleys with the semi-infidelity of modern times; but this danger is now removed by their being educated in their own college, and by their own well-trying and approved pastors. The most zealous promoter of the college was the late Dr Gilly, Canon of Durham, who shewed equal sagacity and benevolence in opening this well of theology undefiled in the Valleys. The candlestick that in the past shone in the peak-engirdled Pra del Tor, has now been transferred to the more open Valley of Luserna, where its light is more likely to attract the eyes of the inhabitants on the plains of Piedmont.

On our way we pass the Orphan Asylum, within

so delightfully tidy and orderly; and before us, nestling amid the woods and foliage that clothe the foot of the Castelluzzo, is the Hospital, which contains sixteen beds, and is, too, a perfect model of cleanliness and of orderly management. How much this is to the credit of the Vaudois, can be understood only by those who have been in Italy. These, and all similar institutions in their Valleys, the Waldenses owe to the munificence of General Beckwith. Of all the friends whom Providence has raised up to aid this remarkable people, no one has had it in his power to do what General Beckwith has done for them. The manner in which he became attached to the Waldenses partakes of that romance which enters so largely into all that is connected with their history. We cannot go into detail, but since 1816 his life and fortune have been entirely devoted to them. He has lived amongst them, he has built hospitals for them, repaired their churches, built schools by the hundred, and assisted in the formation of suitable school-books. To individuals he has ever been ready with his advice and his pecuniary aid, and, with a large estimate of their good, he has ever striven for the elevation of their social and temporal

condition, as a groundwork for their spiritual advancement. His countless beneficences and long devotion to their cause have amply earned for him the title by which he is known all over the Valleys, "the Benefactor of the Vaudois."

We leave La Torre behind. A single step from the street of Marguerita is like the rising of the curtain. Instantaneously, as if evoked by some mighty fiat, the surpassingly glorious panorama of the Val di Luserna rises before us. Its bottom is perfectly level, and may be from one to two miles in width. But who can describe the varied luxuriance of flower, and fruit, and tree that clothes that valley? It wears, first of all, a carpeting of meadows, deliciously soft and fresh, and finely relieved by the silver of the Pelice, which, issuing in a tumultuous torrent from the pass of Mirabouc, spreads out into a stream of pellucid crystal below Bobbio, and meanders through the valley in shining mazes. On its banks, and scattered over its meads, are the walnut, the chestnut, the mulberry, all here attaining a majestic stature. But the glory of its products is the vine, which, here of goodly size, is seen stretching its arms from tree to tree, in all the freedom and elegance of classic

times. On this hand and on that is a wall of great mountains: here, on the left, soft and shady; there, on the right, rugged, lofty, magnificent. At its extremity, doors of everlasting rock shut in the valley. Its enclosing mountain wall on the right presents to the eye a sublime spectacle of hanging gardens. From the green turf up to the ebon sky rise a succession of festooned vines, fields of maize, orchards, groves of chestnut, châteaux, jutting crags, and silvery torrents, flashing in the sunlight, and leaping from rock to rock to join the Pelice.

If you lift your eye higher up the mountain, you find that the fruitage is less, but the grandeur is more. Above you is a perfect maze of stupendous crags, shooting pinnacles of rock, mighty summits, shattered, torn, escarped—here standing up in tower-like strength and form, there hanging in fearful masses over the path. Deep gorges cleave the mountain. From out the dark shadows that fill their abyss-like interior comes the echoing thunder of the torrents that tumble over their riven rocks. High above all stand the white peaks, looking down in serene majesty upon the weltering, tumbling ocean, so awfully imaged in rock and mountain, that rages around them.

At the entrance of the Valley of Luserna is La Torre, and at the other extremity, nestling beneath the great cliffs, is the little classic Bobbio. The distance betwixt them is some twelve miles—this gives us the length of the valley. The road thither is one continuous walk of grandeur and sublimity—of wild, indescribable, overpowering grandeur, mingled with a profusion of scenes of the softest loveliness. It is a mingling of all beauties, from the soft carpet-like meadow, which the streamlets keep so fresh and the wild flowers so gay, and which the chestnut dots with its dense, cool shadows, to that mighty enclosing rampart, which rises to heaven a dazzling creation of rock and vineyard, of white-walled cottage and walnut grove, of crag and gorge, of soaring pinnacle and ice-crowned summit.

A few paces beyond the little Marguerita, and we touch the Castelluzzo. The road to Bobbio skirts its base. Its supreme pinnacle, from an awful height, looks down upon the traveller. We are too near it here to feel its full beauty and effect; but as we approach Luserna from the plains of Piedmont, the Castelluzzo is in truth a noble object. It comes finely and boldly out from the

loftier but less shapely mass of the Vandalin behind it, and rises into the sky in the form of a tall, symmetrical, and majestic column. It is a gigantic pillar of stone not made with hands. That peculiar air of grandeur which the approach to La Torre possesses is owing mainly to this mountain. It gives character to the valley, from whatever point viewed. It is impossible, while you are in the valley, to keep your eye off it. We shall have some fine views of it when we have gone a little beyond our present point; but here, at its foot, it appears simply a mighty upward slope, richly clothed with woods, above which its crowning rocks shoot up in a tall perpendicular shaft to heaven.

With this mountain is associated the memory of one of the greatest calamities that ever befel the Waldenses. There is no darker woe in the long catalogue of woes that make up their history. I refer to the great massacre of 1655. The Castelluzzo, in its time, has looked over many a scene of horror. It has seen the Pelice rolling at its feet a river of blood. It has seen Vaudois blood flowing in the valley in torrents as copious as its thunder-showers. It has seen corpses lying in heaps,

numerous as its own winter-drifts. It has seen Luserna a wide expanse of blazing flame—its sanctuaries and cottages sinking in ashes—and the smoke of its burning ascending like the smoke of a furnace, and rolling away over gorge and summit in darker clouds than those of winter. But of all the scenes of blood and horror upon which the Castelluzzo has looked down, it may be doubted whether it ever beheld any more terrible than the massacre to which we refer—justly styled the “Great Massacre.” Let us sit down here, at the mountain’s base, and tell the story to the reader.

## CHAPTER XIV.

*The Great Massacre.*

This Crime traceable mainly to the House of Medici—Preliminary Attacks—Institution and Object of the Propaganda—Marchioness di Pianezza—Gastaldo's Order—Its Barbarous Execution—Did Rome *fear* as well as hate the Vandois?—Greater Sorrows—Composition of the Massacring Army—Waldenses resolve to Fight—Perfidy of Pianezza—The Massacre begins—Its Horrors—Modes of Torture—Individual Martyrs—The Sepoys outdone—Evidence collected by Leger—The Prime Instigator—Appeal to the Protestant States—Interposition of Cromwell—Mission of Sir Samuel Morland—Tragedy at Castelluzzo—Visit to the Cave—Milton's Sonnet.

It was the year 1650. The throne of Savoy was filled by Charles Emmanuel II., a youth of fifteen. His mother, the Duchess Christina, governed the kingdom as regent. That mother was sprung of a race which have ever been noted for their dissimulation, their cruelty, and their bigoted devotion to Rome. She was the daughter of Mary de Medici of France, and granddaughter of that Catherine de



Medici to whom has been assigned, and we believe on just ground, the main share in the guilt of the awful St Bartholomew Massacre. The base, blind superstition of the grandmother seems to have descended to the granddaughter. In no reign has the lot of the Vaudois been so wretched, in no reign have their tears and blood so profusely flowed, as in that of Charles Emmanuel; but the fact that this prince was constitutionally mild and humane satisfies us that the main share of all these crimes is to be laid, not at his door, but at that of his cold, cruel, and bloodthirsty mother, the regent. In short, it was not the facile spirit of the House of Savoy, but the astute spirit of the House of Medici, under the promptings of the Vatican, that enacted those scenes of carnage which now overwhelmed the Waldenses.

Not all at once did the blow descend. A series of lesser attacks heralded the great and consummating stroke. Machinations, chicaneries, legal robberies were set on foot, extremely harassing and oppressive, no doubt, but falling short of death. The Waldenses were ordered to withdraw, under pain of death, from their settlements at Fenile, Bubbiana, and other places on the skirts of the

plain of Piedmont, and to confine themselves to the narrow limits assigned to them in the mountains. Their patrimonial possessions were confiscated to the exchequer, their churches were pulled down, and their houses were given to Catholics. The more distinguished of their ministers were banished on various frivolous pretexts, and thus were they deprived of their natural leaders. They were next compelled to receive a mission of Capuchin monks, who proceeded to the Valleys on the hopeful task of converting the Waldensian heretics. The fathers were better hands at an *auto da fê* than an argument: they were uniformly worsted in their disputations, and their pious rage prevented them seeing the bad taste and the implied censure of the retort which on these occasions they always cast in the teeth of the Vaudois, namely, that "they made a Pope of their Bible." Young maidens were promised dowries, on condition of their embracing the Popish faith; *Monts-de-Piété* were established; and the Waldenses, overwhelmed by poverty, which had grown out of the confiscations, the billeting of troops upon them, and bad harvests—of which there had been a succession—were induced to pawn what little remained of their goods, and when all

was gone, they were offered restitution in full on condition of renouncing their faith. We ask, what success had the Romanists? A success most disproportionate to means so assiduously plied. The result of all these cajoleries and oppressions, of all these bribes and threats, was that some dozen of individuals conformed to the Romish Church. The work went forward too tardily. Other means were called for.

The Society for "the Propagation of the Faith," established by Pope Gregory XV., in 1622, had already been spread over all Italy and France. The object of the society was originally expressed in the simple and innocent words, "de propagandâ fide" (*for the propagation of the faith*); but since its rise it had undergone some enlargement, if not in its object, yet in the means by which that object was to be attained, and now it had supplemented the original title with the emphatic addition, "et extirpandis hæreticis" (*and the extirpation of heretics*). The membership of the society was numerous: it included both laymen and priests; all ranks, from the noble and the prelate to the peasant and the pauper, pressed into it—the lure being a plenary indulgence to all who engaged in

the good work so unmistakeably indicated in the one brief and pithy clause, "et extirpandis hæreticis." The societies in the smaller towns reported to the metropolitan cities; these to the capital; and the capitals to Rome, where, in the words of Leger, sat "the great spider that held the threads of all this mighty web."

In 1650, the Council of the Propagation of the Faith was established at Turin, the capital of Piedmont, with, of course, a special reference to the Waldenses. There were societies of women as well as of men; and at the head of the former was the Marchioness di Pianezza, a dissolute woman, who, like other conscience-burdened votaries of Rome, strove by an old age of bigotry and blood to expiate a youth passed in lewd pleasures. This woman was stricken with death. In her last hours, she summoned her husband, the Marquis di Pianezza, to her bedside, and charged him, as he valued the repose of her soul and the safety of his own, to execute her dying charge, which was, that he should labour for the conversion of the Waldenses. The Marquis undertook the task *con amore*; but, a bigot and a soldier, he could think of but one way of converting them—by the sword,

namely. It was now that the storm burst on the Waldenses.

On the 25th of January 1655 came the famous order of Gastaldo. That decree commanded the whole inhabitants of Luserna, La Torre, Lusernetta, and San Secundo to withdraw and depart within three days, under pain of death and confiscation of goods, from their dwellings, unless they should be able to shew, within twenty-one days, that they had abjured their religion, or sold their possessions to the Catholics. Anything more inhuman and barbarous, in the circumstances, than this edict, it would not be easy to imagine. It was the depth of winter, and of an Alpine winter, which has terrors unknown even to our more northern region. How, ever, could a multitude like this, including young children and old men, the sick and bedridden, the blind and the lame, undertake such a journey across swollen rivers, through valleys buried in snow, and over mountains covered with ice? They must inevitably perish; and the edict which cast them out was but another form of condemning them to die of cold and hunger on the mountains. As they looked towards the hills, well might they say, "Cold, indeed, are these snow-clad

Alps ; but colder still is the heart of the persecutor." "Pray ye," said Christ, "that your flight be not in the winter." Who does not admire the compassionate spirit that shines forth in these words? The agents of Rome, as if desirous of shewing that their spirit was as bitter and cruel as that of the Saviour was sweet and merciful, chose the very depth of winter for this enforced flight of the Vaudois. An alternative was left them—they might go to mass. Did they avail themselves of this door of escape? The historian Leger informs us that he had a congregation of well-nigh two thousand, and that not a man of them all accepted the alternative of Rome! The whole community rose up as one man, and bearing their aged and sick on their shoulders, and leading by the hand their blind and halt, they bade adieu to their homes; and, traversing the mountains, they were welcomed by their brethren of Angrogna, and Rora, and Bobbio, who joyfully shared with them their own humble and scanty fare—their chestnuts and polenta. Their enemies were amazed when they beheld them rise up and depart.

But one can scarce help feeling astonishment at the part Rome acted towards this simple people.

Was it hatred solely, or was it also fear, that impelled her to do what she did to be rid of them? Could she not let alone this handful of peasants and shepherds? She was mistress of all Europe besides; could she not spare this little territory—this mountain vineyard? Mighty kings bowed before her throne; great nations offered their homage at her footstool; powerful armies supported her pretensions; the revenues of kingdoms filled her coffers;—what mattered it though this poor, unlettered people did not pay her obeisance? “What harm can that do me? Would I be the richer of their homage? Am I the poorer that I want it?” So, one would have thought, Rome might have reasoned. But Rome did not reason thus. Like Haman, whom the sight of Mordecai unnerved, Rome could not rest while the Waldenses existed. Surrounded by all the glory of this world, and entrenched behind all the material and mental power of Europe, she was yet unmanned by the sight of the Waldenses. Terrible dreams haunted her in her Vatican palace. She felt a foreboding of her fall. How strikingly was the prediction verified, “These two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth!”

But to return to our sad narrative. The cruel edict which cast out the Waldenses from their dwellings in the depth of winter, was but the beginning of sorrows. Greater woes trod fast upon the heels of this initial calamity. A portion only of the nation had suffered from the decree of Gastaldo; but the object of the Propaganda was the extirpation of the entire Vaudois race; and the matter was gone about with a consummate perfidy and a most deliberate cruelty. From the upper valleys, to which they had retired, the Waldenses sent respectful representations to the court of Turin. They described their piteous condition in terms so moving (no words could have exaggerated it), and besought the fulfilment of former treaties, in which the honour and truth of the House of Savoy had been pledged, in language so reasonable and just, that one would have thought it was impossible but that they should prevail. Alas no! The ear of their prince had been poisoned by falsehood; access to him even was denied them. Their supplications, accompanied with groans and tears, were unheeded by the Propaganda. The Vaudois were but charming deaf adders—supplicating lions greedy of their prey and thirsting for Vaudois



blood. They were put off, by equivocal answers and delusive promises, till the arrival of the fatal 17th of April.

“I will give you an answer on the 17th,” were the last words of Pianezza to their deputies who waited upon him at Turin. The reply, in point of equivocation, was worthy of the old Delphic oracle. At midnight of the 17th April 1655, this man of craft and blood secretly departed from Turin, and appeared before the Valleys at the head of an army of 15,000 men. That army was a fit instrument for the work it had been chosen to perform. It was composed, first of all, of Piedmontese, who intensely hated the persons of the Vaudois, and yet more intensely coveted their goods; of two regiments of French, whose appetite had been whetted by a taste of Huguenot blood in their own country, and who came across the Alps, as might a pack of bloodhounds, eager to slake their thirst by voracious draughts in the Valleys; and to these were added several companies of Irish, who, banished by Cromwell, arrived in Piedmont dripping from the massacre of forty thousand of their fellow-Protestant subjects. The poor Waldenses began to see what was awaiting them? Whither could

they flee? Behind them was France, ruled by that libertine and bigot, Louis XIV. Before them was Italy—their ancient implacable foe. Of England they thought; but alas! England was too far off to shield them by her powerful arm. Succour they had none but in God.

The Waldenses had three alternatives in their choice: They might go to mass, or they might submit to be butchered like sheep, or they might fight for their lives as men. They chose the latter. Though poorly armed and badly organised, they dared to give battle to Pianezza's powerful and well-equipped host, and for days kept in check his whole army. A series of skirmishes took place along the line of their mountain passes and forts; and in these the Waldenses, though assailed by ten times their number, were completely victorious. The Piedmontese soldiers strove ineffectually to take these positions; they were ignominiously routed, and forced to fall back on their succours in the plain, carrying with them wondrous accounts of Vaudois valour, and infusing incipient panic into the camp.

Guilt is ever cowardly. Pianezza began to have misgivings regarding the issue of the campaign,

and the recollection of former mighty armies which had perished on these mountains by no means reassured him. He changed his tactics. He now betook him to a weapon with which the Waldenses have ever been less able to cope than with the sword. Resuming negotiations, he invited the Waldensian deputies to his table, and overpowered them with kindness. He solemnly protested that he had come into their Valleys only to track a few fugitives who had dared to violate Gastaldo's order. He assured them that from him the Vaudois people had nothing to dread, and that, if only they would permit a few regiments to be quartered among them for a few days, in token of their loyalty, the matter would speedily be at an end. The stratagem prospered to his utmost wishes. In an evil hour the Waldenses listened to these deceitful words, and opened the passes of their Valleys and the doors of their dwellings to Pianezza's soldiers. Janavel alone distrusted the fair words of the Marquis. He closed his Valley of Rora against the murderers. His brethren blamed him as "too violent."

Alas! alas! these poor people were undone. They had received under their roof the execu-

tioners of themselves and their families. The first two days, the 22d and 23d of April, passed in peace, the soldiers sitting at the same table, sleeping under the same roof, and conversing freely with their destined victims. This space of time was needed to allow of every precaution and preparation for what was to follow. The soldiers now occupied all the towns, and villages, and cottages; they hung upon the heights; they had seized the passes, especially that of Mirabouc, leading from Luserna into the Valley of Queyras, in Dauphiné, to prevent escape into France.

At last the blow fell like a thunderbolt. At four of the clock on the morning of the 24th April the signal was given from the Castle of La Torre. But who shall describe the scenes that followed? On the instant a thousand assassins began the work of death. Dismay, horror, agony, woe, in a moment overspread the Valleys of Luserna and Angrogna. Although hell had vomited forth its fiends to riot in crime and human suffering, they could have done nothing worse. These fiends incarnate, the soldiers of the Propaganda, were not content with despatching their victims; they strove to immortalise their names by the infliction of

new and unheard-of cruelties. There is not a way in which human beings can suffer in which the Vaudois were not made to suffer. There is not a device by which the feelings can be lacerated, the frame agonised, and the dying torments prolonged and intensified, that was not had recourse to by these murderers. Their crimes and cruelties can never be all known, because they can never be all told. No man in this age dare write them. In the dreadful record of Leger even—minute, horrible, and appalling as it is—the whole of these dark deeds are not discovered; a veil is drawn over some parts of this awful wickedness, which must remain till the Great Day.

But enough has been disclosed to make the ear of every reader to tingle. We can but gather into one awful group the horrors which Leger has given in detail. Little children were torn from the arms of their mothers, and dashed against the rocks; or, more horrible still, they were held betwixt two soldiers, who, unmoved by their piteous cries and the sight of their quivering limbs, tore them up into two halves. Their bodies were then thrown on the highways and the fields. Sick persons and old people, men and women, were burned

alive in their own houses; some were hacked in pieces; some were bound up in the form of a ball, and precipitated over the rocks or rolled down the mountains. Of many of these the end was most miserable. Being caught in their fall by the branch of a tree or the projection of a rock, in places inaccessible, they might be seen hanging for days in lingering pain and agony.

Profuse of blood and pain, these butchers were yet niggard of death. They would permit it to approach their victim only through a long and winding avenue of torture and shame. They revelled in his agonies, and felt defrauded when death snatched him from their hands. Some were slowly dismembered, and fire applied to the wounds to staunch the bleeding and prolong their sufferings; some were flayed alive; some roasted alive; others were disembowelled; some were horribly and shamefully mutilated, and of others the flesh and brains were boiled and actually eaten by these cannibals. In some instances the tortures inflicted remind us of those of the Neronic era, though, in the main, the Piedmontese barbarities far exceeded the Pagan cruelties. Some were smeared with pitch and used as torches, and some were crucified with

their heads downward. Others had the flesh torn from their bones by the iron chains with which they were flogged, and others were beaten to death with burning brands. Some were buried alive; of some the eyes were torn from their heads, of some the nails from their fingers, and of some the tongues from their mouths. Some were tied to their own orchard trees, and had their heart cut out; others were fastened down into the furrows of their fields, and ploughed ruthlessly into the soil, as men do manure. Some were stuffed with gunpowder, and blown in pieces; others had cats thrust into their open entrails. Mothers were beaten with the dead bodies of their own infants, and fathers were marched to death with the heads of their sons suspended round their necks. But why should we lengthen out an enumeration so dreadful?

Parents were doomed to behold their children first dishonoured, and then massacred, before being themselves called to die. Young women were impaled alive, and carried about by the brutal soldiers as standards, or planted by the roadside as posts, amid circumstances of unutterable atrocity and horror. But these deeds are shielded, in a

sort, from the reprobation of man by their very infamy and wickedness ; but the Great Judge knows them all. With Him we leave them. "My hand trembles," says Leger, "so that I scarce can hold the pen, and my tears mingle in torrents with my ink, while I write the deeds of these children of darkness—blacker even than the Prince of Darkness himself."

No general account can convey nearly so vivid an idea of the horrors of this persecution as the history of individual cases. Could we take these martyrs one by one—could we describe the tragical fate of Peter Simeon of Angrogna—the barbarous death of Magdalene, wife of Peter Pilon of Villaro—the sad story (but no, that story cannot be told) of Anne, daughter of John Charbonier of La Torre—the cruel martyrdom of Paul Garnier of Rora, whose eyes were first plucked out, who next endured other horrible indignities, and, last of all, was flayed alive, and the four divisions of his skin extended on the grating of the windows of the four principal houses in Luserna,—could we describe these cases, with that of hundreds of others equally appalling, we should compile a narrative so awfully harrowing that few, we be-



lieve, would have courage to read it through. Literally did the Waldenses suffer all the things of which the apostle speaks as endured by the martyrs of old:—"They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

These cruelties almost transcend belief—in fact, they form a scene unique in the history of the world. They stand alone in their monstrous forms of fiendish wickedness. There have been scenes in which more blood has been spilt, and more life sacrificed, but none where the actors were so little human. Even after the Sepoy massacres, Leger may still advance his challenge to "all travellers, and all who have studied the history of ancient and modern pagans, whether among the Chinese, Tartars, and Turks they ever witnessed or heard tell of so execrable perfidies and barbarities."

Their authors, presuming, no doubt, that what so far surpassed all former achievements in wickedness would also surpass belief, were so bold as to deny,

even before the blood so profusely shed in the Valleys was well dry, that these deeds had ever been done. Leger took effectual care that that denial should avail them nothing, and that clear, irrefragable, indubitable proof of these awful crimes should go down to posterity. After the massacre, he travelled from commune to commune, attended by notaries, who took down the attestations and depositions of the survivors and eye-witnesses of these deeds in the presence of the council and consistory of the place. He next compiled and published to the world, from the evidence of these eye-witnesses, a book, now before us,\* which Dr. Gilly has truly characterised as one of the most "dreadful" books which the world contains. The original of these depositions he gave to Sir Samuel Morland, who deposited them, together with other valuable documents pertaining to the Waldenses, in the library of the University of Cambridge.

The aspect of the Valleys when these scenes of horror were going forward may be well imagined,

\* HISTOIRE GÉNÉRALE DES EGLISES ÉVANGÉLIQUES DES VALLÉES DE PIÉMONT OU VAUDOISES. Divisée en deux Livres. Par JEAN LEGER, Pasteur et Modérateur des Eglises des Vallées, et depuis la violence de la persécution, appelé à l'Eglise Wallonne de Leyde. A Leyde. 1669.

or, rather, cannot be imagined. The streamlets tinged with blood; the victims climbing the mountains, with the murderer on their track, tracing them oft by the prints of their bleeding feet upon the snow; the smoke and burning of their dwellings, for a monk and priest attended each party of soldiers to set fire to the houses of the massacred Waldenses; the cries and groans of the dying and the tortured, re-echoing from rock to rock, till it seemed as if the very mountains were lamenting; with loud and sorrowful wailings, the slaughter of their children,—all these form a scene so full of wickedness and horror, so replete with agony and woe, that its like has rarely been witnessed on earth, and, we should hope and trust, will never be witnessed again.

But who was the prime instigator of these deeds? Who awoke in the breasts of the Piedmontese this immense hatred of a peaceful and inoffensive people? Who inculcated that to slay, ravish, and burn was a shining virtue? Who sanctified these deeds of blood as the most acceptable service to God? Who set up paradise as the price of murder, and taught that heaven was to be earned by becoming monsters of cruelty and crime

on earth? Who held by the principle then, and holds by it still, that it is a bounden and sacred duty to put Protestants to death? These questions I need not answer. "Never did Vaudois perish," in the words of Leger, "but his blood was to be found on the lintels of the Vatican."

Uncontrollable grief seized the hearts of the survivors at the sight of their brethren slain, their country devastated, and their Church overthrown. "Oh that my head were waters," exclaims Leger, "and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." "It was then," he continues, "that the fugitives who had been snatched as brands from the burning could address God in the words of the 79th Psalm, which, literally as emphatically, describes their condition :—

' O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance ;  
Thy hely temple have they defiled ;  
They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.  
The dead bodies of Thy servants have they given  
To be meat unto the fowls of heaven,  
The flesh of Thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.  
Their blood have they shed like water ; . . .  
And there was none to bury them.' "

When the storm had somewhat abated, Leger assembled his scattered countrymen to deliberate with them on the steps to be taken. He strongly dissuaded them from an idea which, it does not surprise us to find, was now beginning to be entertained of abandoning the Valleys altogether. They must, he said, rebuild their Zion, in the faith that the God of their fathers would not permit the Church of the Valleys to be finally overthrown. To encourage them, he promised to lay a representation of their sufferings before their brethren of other countries, who, he felt assured, would come to their help at this crisis. These counsels prevailed. "Our tears are no longer of water," wrote they to the Protestants of Europe; "they are of blood: they do not merely obscure our sight, they choke our very hearts. Our hands tremble and our heads ache by the many blows we have received. We cannot frame an epistle answerable to the intent of our minds and the strangeness of our desolations. We pray you to excuse us, and to collect, amid our groans, the meaning of what we fain would utter." After this touching introduction, they proceed with a representation of their state, expressing themselves in terms, the modera-

tion of which contrasts strongly with the extent of their wrongs. Protestant Europe was horror-struck when it heard of the massacre. Nowhere did the tidings awaken a deeper sympathy or a stronger indignation than in England. Cromwell proclaimed a fast, ordained a collection for the sufferers, and wrote to all the Protestant princes and to the King of France, entreating their aid for the Vaudois; and one of the most sacred and noblest tasks ever undertaken by the great poet Milton was the inditing these letters. Finally, in testimony of his deep interest in the matter, the Protector sent Sir Samuel Morland to present his letter to the Duke of Savoy, expressing his sorrow and astonishment at the barbarities committed on those who were his brethren in the faith, and hinting mildly that if these wrongs were not redressed, his interference might possibly take another form. On his way to Turin, Sir Samuel visited the Valleys, and the remembrance of the devastations which his own eyes had seen helped, doubtless, to give point to his eloquence when, addressing the Duke, he told him, plainly as pungently, that, "if all the tyrants of all times and ages were alive again, they would doubtless be ashamed to find

that nothing barbarous nor inhuman, in comparison of these deeds, had ever been invented by them. In the meantime," he continued, "the angels are stricken with horror; men are dizzy with amazement; heaven itself appears astonished with the cries of the dying, and the very earth to blush with the gore of so many innocent persons. Avenge not Thyself, O God, for this mighty wickedness, this parricidal slaughter! Let Thy blood, O Christ, wash out this blood!"\*

In this great tragedy, the hill beneath which we are seated had its share. In its very crest, hung high in heaven, is a cave, so roomy, it is said, as to admit some hundreds. To this cave the confessors were wont to flee when the valleys below glittered with steel. To this cave they fled on this occasion. But, alas! thither the persecutors tracked them, and discovering, after some search, its entrance, helpless age, fond mother, and tender infant, were remorselessly dragged forth, rolled

\* The HISTORY of the EVANGELICAL CHURCHES of the Valleys of Piedmont, containing a most exact Geographical Description of the Place, and a Faithful Account of the Doctrine, Life, and Persecutions of the Ancient Inhabitants. Together with a most naked and punctual Relation of the late Bloody Massacre, 1655. By Samuel Morland, Esq., His Highness' Commissioner Extraordinary for the affairs of the said Valleys. London. 1658.

down the awful precipice, and dashed against the rocks at its bottom. A sacred interest belongs in consequence to the Castelluzzo. It is the noblest martyrs' monument in the world; and so ought it to be, for it is representative of, not one, but thousands of martyrs. It rises a mighty hieroglyph in stone of five long centuries of martyrdoms.

One of my last days in the Valleys was devoted to an excursion to this cave. Dr Revel and Professor Revel kindly accompanied me. Professor Revel had been there but once before in his life, and Dr Revel, if I remember right, not at all. The excursion, therefore, had scarce less interest to them than to myself. The ascent occupied from two to three hours, and amply rewarded us, if but by the noble views it gave us of the plain of Piedmont, with its numerous towns, conspicuous among which were Carignano and Turin, and the long purple line of the Apennines beyond. We were fortunate enough to secure the services of the same peasant who had been Dr Gilly's guide some thirty years before, and whose patrimonial fields lie near the summit of the mountain. So terrific a spot I nowhere else have set foot upon. How the poor people were able to find their way



down into the cave, without rolling down the precipice, or how the soldiers could follow them into their hiding-place I know not, unless there grew bushes among the rocks at its mouth then, which are wanting now. Dr Gilly was let down into it by ropes. He describes it as a deep pit in the mountain, almost totally dark, and completely empty, as resembling, if one may judge from his description, a place some of my readers may have seen—John Welsh's dungeon in Blackness Castle to wit, only that the cave in the Castelluzzo is vastly larger.

The cave is topped by the rock that forms the summit of the mountain. On that rock I laid myself down (for to have approached the edge in an erect posture would have been sheer madness), and crept along till I had reached the precipice's dizzy brink, and looked over. Down, down, sheer down thousands of feet ran the black naked face of the mountain. At a profound depth lay the Vale of Luserna; its river a mere thread—its fields patches of green a few inches square—its chestnut trees dots scarcely visible—its town of La Torre a tiny city, with tiny streets, and tiny roofs, and tiny spires, that might all be packed up in a toy-

box—whilst the mountains of debris at the bottom of the steep were minished to mole-hills. I began to fancy what might be the feelings of a poor creature about to be flung over this precipice, down which it was appalling even to look. The idea was too much on the spot. The landscape beneath me began to swim, the mountain to rock, and fain was I to close my eyes, and make my way back from the edge of an abyss so horrifying.

It is but a moment that the martyr's pile stands, or his agony lasts, and yet there comes from it an influence that is deathless. An invisible finger writes the transaction upon the spot, and gives it in eternal keeping to the rocks. And thus, the martyr's spirit is stirring with mighty power the hearts of men, and rending the fetters of the tyrant and the bigot, ages after his body is but ashes. All the actors and victims in this great tragedy have passed away long since, yet here is a witness of the event! The Castelluzzo whispers the crime to every passer-by. Whispers it, did I say? It proclaims it in a voice of thunder. And who may silence that voice? The living confessor Rome may bind and burn at the stake—the page of history she may falsify or erase—still the very

stones will cry out. By that law that links material objects with moral and tragic associations, the Castelluzzo will continue, in every coming age, to proclaim the misdeeds of Rome. And with the Castelluzzo we may join Milton's sonnet. These two witnesses will travel down together to the future, and never let Rome's crime die. The hymn invests with interest the mountain, and the mountain gives emphasis and echo to the hymn, wafting its prayer up through the silent firmament to the very gates of heaven.

“Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones  
 Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;  
 Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old,  
 When all our fathers worshipt stocks and stones,  
 Forget not: in Thy book record their groans  
 Who were Thy sheep, and in their ancient fold  
 Slain by the bloody Piemontese, that roll'd  
 Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
 The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
 To heaven. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow  
 O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway  
 The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow  
 A hundredfold, who, having learn'd Thy way,  
 Early may fly the Babylonian woe.”

Never once, during all my sojourn, did my eye light on the Castelluzzo without this noble hymn recurring to my mind. Whatever the hour, whether dawn awoke on the lofty summit, or starry

eye closed in around it, methought I could hear  
the poet's anthem hymned forth by thousands of  
invisible choristers, circling in melodious numbers  
round the mount, rolling in thunder through the  
arches of the sky, and crying eternally,

“ Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughter'd saints ! ”

## CHAPTER XV.

## Walk to Bobbio.

**An Alhambra of Rock and Sward—The Castelluzzo—A Last Look—The Cave and its Associations—Gorges—Torrents and Meads—Mowing Operations—More Gorges—Villaro—Metamorphosis of its Temple—Its Christian Interest—Grandeur of Luserna grows as we approach its Termination—The Land an Emblem of the History—Dr Revel's Summer Circuit—The Campaigns of the Vaudois explained by Dr Revel—A Church always rose beside the Camp—Old Churches still Existing—Winter of the Waldensian Church—A Spring Time—The Amphitheatre of the Hills—Approach to Bobbio—The Barion—The Presbytère.**

WE have told the story of the great tragedy. May never man have another such tale to tell of this or of any other valley! Now let us up along the Val Pelice. It is liker a gorgeous hall, such as monarch might choose for an audience-chamber, could his power enable him to create such, than a fabric fashioned out of sward, and tree, and rock. But though monarch could build walls as high as these, enclosing a floor as ample as this,

where could he find the other glories that give magnificence to the Val di Luserna?—these solemn shadows, these golden shafts of light, these blushing vines that enwreath its piled-up rocks, and especially that glorious fretted work of silver and gold that runs all round beneath the deep azure of the ceiling? These defy mortal power. You can make an Alhambra; you cannot create a Val Luserna.

On quitting the bottom of the Castelluzzo, and looking behind, we have a fine peep of the plain of Piedmont. Looking over the roofs of La Torre, and through betwixt the vine-clad heights of San Giovanni on the one side, and the lower ridges of Monte Friolante on the other, its green bosom heaves in sight, level and limitless as ocean. It is seen lying all tranquilly, 'neath a calm and stirless atmosphere and a radiant sun. It is but a small portion of the plain that is visible, but that is suggestive of illimitable space, running out and out, as it is seen to do, till it meets that dim and far-off line where the firmament bends down upon it. It is gemmed with white towns, which sparkle in its verdant expanse as sparkle the stars in the ebon vault; and to see these is to see, in the words

of the poet, "earth paved like heaven." And a heaven it might be, if physical beauty and abundance could make such.

" There the large olive rains its amber store  
In marble founts ; there grain, and flower, and fruit  
Gush from the earth, until the land runs o'er :  
But there, too, many a poison-tree has root."

Especially does the upas-tree of Rome still cast its shadow heavily upon it. Did the true light shine there, what a glorious land it would be! And there are some streaks of day on its horizon—some golden tints on its Apennines.

We are skirting the base of the Castelluzzo. Stop, and take yet another look of it. You gaze right up into its awful face. How bravely it lifts its bold, venerable brow into the firmament, and stands gazing towards the plain of Turin with mien as majestically placid as if it had never seen that plain, in days of yore, rise up in an armed tempest, and come marching to assail it! Its pillar-like form, as seen when entering the Valleys, is here lost, and what strikes you is the ample frontage below, serving as a massy pedestal to the soaring column that rises upon it. How feathery with woods its lower half! What a

sharp yet ragged line its edge forms as it cuts into the blue sky! and how intensely vivid every object upon it! You see single trees growing all along on the line of its edge; they are as distinct and beautiful as if the blue sky were a canvas, and the mountain, with its woods, a painting. How far, far away, and how high above you, yet how visible, are these trees! Slender as a very thread are their stems, and bright and shining as silver. You think you could count every leaf as it hangs quivering in the sunlight, so transparent is the atmosphere of the valley, and so intense the glory which the sun lends to every object.

Above the woods is a mass of debris and fallen rocks, which countless tempests have torn from its summit, and gathered, girdle-like, round the Castelluzzo. From amidst these the supreme column shoots up, and touches that white cloud which is now floating past in mid-heaven. What dark spot is that which you see in the face of the cliff, just below its crowning rocks? It looks like the shadow of a passing cloud upon the stone, but it is so high up you cannot make it out with certainty. That is the mouth of the cave where the Vaudois were wont to hide. The friendly chamber



within you cannot see; yet is it fragrant with saintly and martyr memories. It is like the cave in Horeb, or the prison at Philippi, and many a dungeon since. No sun ever shot his rays into it; yet often has it glowed with a brighter than an earthly radiance. Doubtless, some have said of it, "It is good to be here." He that walked beside the three children in the fiery furnace has often come down and dwelt with His saints in this cave. Hours of communion, sweeter far than any they ever enjoyed in their "temples," they have enjoyed in this temple not made with hands. When the valley beneath was a pandemonium, red with crime, and ringing with the execrations and oaths of the persecutor, this was a little heaven. Here praises were sung; here prayer was offered, which, like a winged courier, darting forth betwixt the rocky portals of this air-hung oratory, and mounting above the Alps, held on its way, with untiring foot and undazzled eye, till it stood before the throne of the Eternal, and obtained speedy and effectual help from Him who made the earth and the heavens. Never, while the Castelluzzo stands, will that tragedy be forgotten. "What mountain is that?" must every one ask who enters the Val-

leys. "That is the mountain and the cave," will the Vaudois reply, "to which our fathers fled when Rome sent her soldiers to slay them. It was down that awful steep that they were rolled by the 'bloody Piedmontese,' and it was on these rocks and heaps of debris that their 'bones' lay 'scattered'—a monument at once of the persecutors' cruelty and their own unyielding steadfastness."

But we pass on. We have rounded the bottom of the Castelluzzo. What a sublime gorge opens to view, and how sudden and terrific its burst! Immediately beyond the Castelluzzo, on the right, a mighty cleft parts the Alps from top to bottom. Within its ragged jaws are dense shadows, which prevent you seeing how far inward the gorge extends. The sides of the rent are formed, here of perpendicular precipices, there of piled-up ledges of great rocks, on which stand trees, silent and motionless; and again of great crags, which climb up and up, in terrific confusion and disarray, to the airy pinnacles of the Alps. There jutting masses threaten each other across the narrow gorge. The echoing thunder of a torrent breaks on the ear from amidst the shadows that fill the rent. As Wordsworth says—

“The brook itself,  
Old as the hills that feed it from afar,  
Doth rather deepen than disturb the calm,  
Where all things else are still and motionless.”

What a contrast betwixt the sunny vale and the gloom-invested gorge! You think of the gorge as a living thing—an embodiment of Terror sitting moping in eternal shadows on the margin of these green, flowery, laughing meads.

We pass a torrent by a bridge—the same whose rushings we heard in the ravine. It shoots swiftly past, and is off to pour its crystal tribute into the crystal Pelice. Yet not so fast but that the shady chestnut and the bright meadow can sip its stream as it flows onward. Beyond the torrent the path is bordered by a luxuriant profusion of grain and fruit. Fields of maize, festooned vines, amid which rise the walnut and mulberry, clothe the ground, and present to the eye a prospect as soft and luscious as that rampart of splintered, gorge-cleft, cloud-surmounting mountains, that walls it in, is stern and grand.

A little farther on, and the full grandeur of the Val di Luserna begins to be visible. Suddenly it unfolds itself, like a scroll thrown loose, displaying to the eye its fine amplitude of bottom, stretching

from mountain's base to mountain's base, and running on in its glory of bright meadows, freckled with the shadows of great trees, and bespangled with glittering streams, which all trend to the winding, central band of silver, the Pelice. There is scarce a meadow that has not its couple of mowers, with their attendant troop of maidens. Mowing operations go on at almost all seasons in the Valleys; for so great is the heat, and so abundant the irrigation, that their meadows yield some half-dozen crops of hay in the year. These meadows are smooth as a bowling-green. They have nothing of the shaggy look of fields devoted to grazing in our country. They resemble the well-kept lawn of some mansion-house. Their quiet, well-dressed air contrasts finely with the wild, worn, and tumultuous mountain scenery by which they are overhung.

We pass on. Another chasm, mantled in deep shadows, and bristling with jagged rocks, opens on the right. Thus it is that every step up this grand panorama presents new combinations of beauty and grandeur. There a green nook peeps out, nestling and sweet as flower in spring, or as star in early twilight. There a gorge rises, black

as night, and wrapt in mysterious gloom ; there a châlet looks down out of mid-heaven, its white walls sweetly gleaming out from amidst vine leaves. There far-retreating ravines, rich in sunlight, and in corn-fields, and in chestnut groves, and in torrents that leap from the rock, and fill the quiet vale with their music, open to you. And nearer you, in a bay-like bend of the mountain, is a perfect forest of crags, shivered and jumbled together in the most admired confusion ; and pinnacles which rise tall and slender, like cathedral spires, and bury their tops amid the white clouds that rake the mountains. Travelling on in this manner for six miles, we arrive at Villaro.

Architectural grace the little Villaro has none. No dome rises in air ; no battlemented wall or tower gives it the air of city. Villaro is a mere hamlet, unpretending and humble as hamlet may be. It is a single street of irregularly built houses, lying along a platform or green ledge of the valley, raised some two hundred feet or so above the Pelice, that flows past at some quarter-mile's distance in front. The walls of its houses are white-washed, and have a pleasant look through its fruit trees. They may count a hundred and fifty or

two hundred in all, and are mostly of one storey. Such as attain the dignity of two storeys have the usual wooden balcony which is so prominent a feature in all the houses of the country. On the right, as you enter, you have the Roman Catholic chapel, with its usual embellishments of little pictures, gilt images, *credos* and *aves* in Latin stuck in tinsel frames, Madonnas, all of them of a very tawdry kind. Do the Romanists really hope, by these things, to convert the Vaudois? Why, even such Papists as they have in the Valleys they are compelled to import.

At the other end of the village, the west to wit, stands the Protestant "temple." It is a plain but substantial building, having above the door-way, as a motto, in French, the words, "I will go into Thy House. I will pay my vows unto Thee." It is surmounted by a white square tower, which, rising above the fruit trees, which, in the absence of ramparts, enclose the little town within a zone of foliage, indicates the site of Villaro all over the valley round. It happened, on one of those many occasions when the inhabitants were compelled to seek refuge in the mountains, that the town and church fell into the hands of the Catholics. The

church the Papists judged a great prize. For once they could sing mass in a Vaudois temple. Having thoroughly cleansed it with holy water, they proceeded to garnish it in the way after their own hearts. Well, the Vaudois returned, but they scarce knew their own church again. The pulpit had been metamorphosed into an altar. Pictures of apostles and saints, with shaven crowns and double chins, looked down from the walls; and near the door stood a rude wooden image of the Virgin, with something like a crown upon its head. The Vaudois, with wonderful bad taste, no doubt, were not slow to turn the whole of this bravery—saints, Madonna, and all—to the door. This done, one of the pastors entered the pulpit, and chose for his text a passage which looked as if it had been specially written for the occasion: "They have no knowledge who set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save."

But adieu, thou little Villaro! We leave thee beneath the shadow of thine own great hills, looking forth upon the quiet beauty of thine ever green meadows. Such ornament as architecture can give thou canst not boast, but a prouder distinction is

thine—a distinction which many a renowned city might well envy thee, and, to gain which, might well be willing to exchange the glories of dome, and pillar, and arch. In thee have lived and died many of the saints of God. Nor poet nor sculptor has come out of thee, but thou hast given patriots and martyrs to the world; and while rayless night wrapt the cities and the nations of Europe, in thee the true light shone.

Emerging from Villaro, the valley opens to its very extremity. It rises upon you, in its beauty of green meadow and its grandeur of torn mountain, one of the most magnificent scenes on earth. How level its bottom! the floor of your own dwelling is not more so. How it sparkles all over with mountain torrents! and what a fine flood of rolling silver is the Pelice! How cool the shadows of these great trees that traverse it in rows, and how full of music the voices of these peasants with which the meadows are all alive—some busy with the scythe, others piling the hay in ricks, others loading the waggon, which trundles off to Villaro, or slowly winds up to some farm-house in the mountains! And yonder is Bobbio—the little classic Bobbio!—nestling at the feet of the great precipices



that shut in the valley, and looking forth from its thick screen of foliage upon the quiet vale. The scene recalls to one's mind that fine passage in Milton's "L'Allegro" in which he describes the beauties of the place of his retirement, only here the scenery is greatly grander:—

“ While the ploughman, near at hand,  
Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,  
And the milkmaid singing blithe,  
And the mower whets his scythe;  
And every shepherd tells his tale,  
Under the hawthorn in the dale.  
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,  
While the landscape round it measures;  
Russet lawns, and fallows grey,  
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;  
Mountains on whose barren breast  
The labouring clouds do often rest;  
Meadows trim, with daisies pied,  
Shallow brooks and rivers wide;  
Towers and battlements it sees,  
Bosom'd high in tufted trees.”

But look upwards: what a crowding into the view of peaks unseen till now! As the stage gets filled when the drama is to close, so these great peaks come rushing upon the scene now that the Val di Luserna is about to terminate. On the right you have the grand summits of Mont Ventacul, the Alpe d'Infernet, and the Alpe or Col

Julien, rising behind a fronting wall of swelling ridges and pine-tufted crags. On the left are the yet grander summits of the Alpe des Rousses, the Col de Malaure, and the Col de la Croix. These rise out of a sea of mountains of which the forms are almost infinite. Some are rounded off as domes, others rise sharp as needles, others present against the sky a torn, jagged edge, serrated like a saw. Above this array of peaks rise the prouder forms we have named. We want but the flashing peak of Monte Viso to complete the picture; but the giant stands hidden behind the nearer though inferior mass of the Alpe des Rousses.

Right before us, rising like a wall out of the green plain, are tremendous precipices. These seem to say to the traveller, "Here are the limits of your journey. Foot of man cannot go farther." As here, in traversing their country, so in the history of the people: again and again fearful crises have arisen; abysses have yawned suddenly and frightfully before them, and the Vaudois have stood aghast in the presence of these difficulties, as Israel stood trembling and aghast on the shores of the Red Sea. "Alas! alas!" they have said, "who shall divide these mountains? who

shall open a path through that iron phalanx of foes? Surely our last hour is come: surely our grave is dug!" But not so. That God who parted the sea of old, and led His people through its depths, has, with sudden and marvellous power, dissolved the combinations formed for their overthrow, scattered the foes leagued for their destruction, and through the midst of stupendous difficulties and woes, as through the valley of the shadow of death, has led them onward to the enjoyment, in larger measure than before, of their ancient liberties and their holy faith. So here: go up to these cliffs which shut in the valley with their bars of adamant—a path straightway opens through the mountains. A narrow, gloomy pass goes winding along through these splintered rocks, and, passing under the dark peak of the Col de la Croix, opens into the Valleys of the French Protestants, and finally lands you on the plains of Dauphiné.

My first journey up the Val di Luserna to Bobbio was gone, as I have already said, in company of Dr Revel. His conversation so interested me that it permitted only occasional glances at the magnificent scenery through which we were passing. When pastor of Bobbio, Dr Revel had

wandered hundreds of times over these mountains ; he had become, in consequence, familiar with every rock, and mountain peak, and chalet now in sight. I could deeply sympathise with him as he described to me how fondly his heart still lingered amid these grand solitudes. As old friends were these mountains and torrents. The sight of them recalled the remembrance of former labours, of past joys, or of sorrows now turned to joys. Even now he is accustomed to spend a week, and sometimes a fortnight, of his college vacation in summer in going the circuit of these hills, and visiting the herdsmen of his former flock, preaching to them by day, and sleeping at night in their mountain chalets.

“ Now, look here,” said he, “ and I will explain to you how it was that our fathers were able to elude the pursuit, and bid defiance to armies ten times their number. You see that great rock ?” said he, pointing to a square, tower-like mass of rock, that rose at some considerable height on the mountain ; “ and yonder crag ?” he continued, pointing to a similar rock a little way beyond the former on the mountain’s side ; “ and that and that ?” indicating others that rose at almost regular

distances all around the magnificent amphitheatre we were traversing.

“I do,” I said. “In any other country these would be mountains themselves; but here they are but protuberances on greater mountains. But such as they are, I have never seen any fortress of man’s making that could rival them in size and strength.”

“Well,” he said, “when the plain was occupied by soldiers, our fathers had, of course, to betake themselves to the mountains. They threw up a camp behind the first height, and defended it till on the point of being taken. They would then escape over night to the next height, where they entrenched themselves anew. When that was on the point of being taken, they removed to a third. In this sort of flying warfare they passed all round the valley, till their enemies, wearied of the pursuit, or cut off in detail, withdrew, or till God had thwarted their policy, and changed their hearts to peace.”

Dr Revel proceeded to give other particulars of great interest. For instance, he mentioned that a church always arose beside the camp. “To the temples in the Valleys there was, of course, at

these times, no access ; but the church could not be wanted. It was, in fact, another camp ; its ordinances were the best feeders of our fathers' heroism. The most devout were ever the best fighters ; and, therefore, ever beside the camp rose the temple, as of old the altar alongside the tent of the patriarchs." " Many of these churches," he continued, " remain to this day. Were you to climb to that height," he said, indicating one of the heights immediately above, " you would find the old church still standing. The original pulpit even existed till within twenty years ago. And in yonder gorge," pointing to a ravine which was at the moment opening to view on the other side of the valley, and running up betwixt the Col de Malaure and the Col de la Croix, " there is one of these churches, in which the pulpit still remains. I preached in it the other summer." The pulpit is two hundred years old, and of course dates from about the time of the Great Massacre.

These churches, Dr Revel farther explained, though springing out of the necessities of those warlike times, are very serviceable even in these days of peace. They are used at an early hour of the Sabbath morning by the herdsmen, who spend

their summer upon the mountains with their cattle, and who otherwise would have to go without public worship, the churches in the Valleys being out of their reach. And in winter, when the snow happens to be deep, the families residing in that part of the mountain assemble in the old church at eight in the morning, the pastor going thither from Bobbio, and returning to officiate in his usual place of meeting at the regular hour.

It was pleasant to hear Dr Revel dwell, with evident delight, upon the revival which has of late taken place in the Waldensian Church. The century opened with the poison-cloud of French infidelity hanging above the Valleys. The vine, which had remained green amid the fires of persecution, sickened and seemed about to die. But in 1829 Felix Neff crossed the Alps. At his preaching fresh leaves began to clothe the old stock. From that day it has gone on to flourish. In none of the Valleys will you now hear "another gospel," although in all it may not be preached with the same unction and zeal. Bibles, formerly somewhat scarce in the Valleys, are now abundant; family worship is more common; prayer-meetings are more numerous; in short, in

every branch of practical piety there has been a decided revival.

But especially in the mission cause the change is striking. There was a time when the Waldensian Church was the one missionary Church in Europe. From her central lamp in the Pra del Tor shone rays that radiated to Britain on the one side, and to Calabria on the other. But with the middle of the last century came a period of cold and darkness to all Churches, and to the Church of "the Valleys" among the rest. Her missionary operations were entirely suspended. The real cause of this inactivity and torpor was a failing of vital power; but along with this, or growing out of it, were other causes tending to the same result. Five hundred years of wasting persecutions had left her almost exanimate. She was sunk in deep poverty, and was all but entirely dependent upon foreign friends, whom she feared to offend. Large part of the stipend of her ministers came from Holland, and might not Holland be displeased if she should give this money to others, and give it for the propagation of doctrines in which Holland did not very heartily sympathise? The question with the Waldenses had



come to be a question of existence, not of propagation. They feared to go forth into Italy lest new storms should arise. In short, to use Dr Revel's illustration, their Church was a machine that had got clogged. Its wheels were rusty; it needed to be cleaned and oiled. This had been done; and the machine, which had long stopped, was working again. The Church of the Valleys was giving herself in good earnest to her old work of missions. For a century she had been content to dwell within her Valleys; now she was planting stations on the plain of Piedmont, and training in her college evangelists to occupy these stations with effect. She had recognised the voice of her fathers' God, saying to her, " 'Strengthen thy stakes, lengthen thy cords.' Go forth and avenge yourself upon your old enemy, not by doing to her as she has done unto you, but by giving her peace for war, the gospel for the sword."

Advance a mile beyond Villaro. You are now in one of the grandest amphitheatres in the world. How green and shady that floor! how stainless the silver of these rills! how large and bright these wild flowers! and these maidens, busy in the hay field beneath the chestnut trees, descendants

of martyrs, with what an air of rural freedom and happiness they prosecute their work in their broad-brimmed hats and exquisitely simple yet picturesque garb! and how their voices ring out and fill the valley with a multitudinous murmuring melody!

Mark the hills: What an array of glorious forms stand all round you! The glittering line of dome, and pyramid, and spire, and jagged, torn peak runs on, cutting sharply the blue sky. What in the distance appeared mere lines of shadow on the mountain's face have now, on a near approach, opened out into fine valleys, like the larger Valley of Luserna, of which they are offshoots, richly appavelled in white streams, chestnut woods, corn fields and pasturages, and great ribs of Alps. At their extremity, seen in the far distance, is a single peak, and in some a cluster of peaks, glittering in "winter's icy mail," or so worn and spiky that even snow-flake cannot rest upon them.

Another mile forward, then pause: What a noble vista on the right! The thick chestnut groves amid which you have been moving for some little space open and reveal the mountains. The Alps are here scooped out into a vast amphitheatre, the

successive circling tiers of which are formed of mountain placed above mountain. When in Rome, some years ago, I was wont to step almost every other day into the Coliseum, and, taking my stand in the centre of its area, to admire its strength and size. It sweeps round you liker mountain than a thing of man's building, and its tiers of broken seats remind you of successive ledges of rock. I strove to recall the image of the Coliseum in contrast with this mighty Alp-built amphitheatre before me, but how diminutive! The Coliseum, though almost itself a city, if set down bodily upon one of these ledges would have seemed in comparison but a nut-shell.

We now approach Bobbio; we can see its white houses gleaming through the tall shady trees, festooned with vines, that cover this part of the valley. The grandeur of the mountains is now at its height. If it chance that a white raking cloud is moving across the Alps, so much the better—the scene will be much enhanced thereby. Great peaks flashing upon the sight this moment, and disappearing the next; sudden rifts and openings in the cloud, through which is seen a dazzling show of what look like domes, minarets, and battlements,

irresistibly impress you with the idea that you are entering some region of more than mortal magnificence—that it is some city of the celestials to whose gates you are drawing nigh. But even without such accompaniment the scene is surpassingly grand. Before you rises the “Barion,” shapely as Egyptian obelisk, but far taller and massier, wearing an air of fadeless grace. It rises right behind Bobbio, and its summit is some three thousand feet above the roofs of the little town. Compared with it, the proudest column of Europe’s proudest capital is but a toy. But even the Barion is but an item in this assemblage of glories. Overtopping the Barion, and sweeping round the extremity of the valley, is a glorious circle of crags, pinnacles, and pine-tufted precipices, enclosed by a background of dark peaks. The mountains part the sun’s rays, and a magnificent golden flecking of light and shadow is added to the wild romantic grandeur of their forms. This Alp is in light—it seems to burn even in the intense brilliancy; and you can tell every rock, every cottage, every tree, every cleft that diversifies its surface. This other is in shadow; a fine filmy veil enrobes it, so opaque as to conceal its covering, yet so transparent as to reveal its form. It stands

in dim majesty before you. Is it light or darkness that fills these ravines? It is not light; for a confused and broken image of various objects—woods, crags, knolls, houses—presents itself to the eye. It is not darkness; for these ridges of rock that run down into the ravine are tipped with silver, and the dells that nestle in them are verdant and shining as spring itself.

Approaching Bobbio, two noble trees, one on each side of the road, rise to a great height, and uniting their tops, form a magnificent arch. It is the only gate the little town has. This arch is so lofty as to admit a view of the Barion from top to bottom, hanging, as it were, before you in the arch, like a vast painting set in a frame of foliage. Passing through the arch, you find yourself beneath a covered way of trellised vines. The roof is a rich arabesque of Nature's making, formed of the vine-leaf and pendulous clusters of black and white grapes, as fine as I have seen anywhere. Emerging from this open alcove, you are in Bobbio. It runs out in a humble street of white-walled houses, with a few lanes as offshoots, and nearly gains the point where the valley contracts into the savage defiles of Mirabouc.

In this unrivalled amphitheatre sits Bobbio, with its great mountains leaning over it—in summer-time buried in blossoms and fruit, and the goodly shade of the vine, the chestnut, the apple, the cherry, and walnut tree; and in winter, gilded this hour with the dazzling icy gleam of snows, and wrapped the next in the gloom of mist and cloud, through which the voice of warring winds and of thundering torrents may be heard sounding grandly. Turning up a narrow lane, to where a white two-storey house gleamed out from amidst the branches of a mantling vine, Dr Revel and myself entered the manse of Pastor Davyt. We were welcomed by a hearty greeting, and led up stairs into a neat apartment, redolent of the fresh breezes of the Col Julien. In a few minutes a cloth, white as snow on Alp, covered the table, and thereon were set bread, butter, and cheese—the produce of the mountain dairies—and from the orchards and vineyards of Bobbio, a bottle of cherry-water, and one of wine.

## CHAPTER XVI.

*Passage of the Col Julien.*

Rock and Oath of Sibaud—Chestnut Groves and Farm-Houses—A Look Behind—Lizards and Wild Flowers—Helplessness on Col Julien without a Guide—Illustrative Anecdote—A Traveller in a Fix—A Dinner—The Cathedral Font and the Mountain Runnel—Alpine Herdsmen—View from Summit of Col Julien—Effect of the Mountain Mist—Hill-top Musings—The Pass—Descent—Valley of Prali—Evening and Rest.

THE day of my first walk to Bobbio was that on which I crossed the Col Julien. Resting an hour in the presbytère, I started at noon. Betwixt La Torre and Villaro we had come up with a countryman of Bobbio. He was a member of the Vaudois Church there; and, of course, well known to Dr Revel, his former pastor. After a few minutes' conversation with him, Dr Revel turned to me and said, "This is your guide." Dr Revel had arranged terms and all with the young man. He had an

honest face and athletic limbs, and glad was I to have such a conductor across the mountain. He hurried on before us, to be ready against our arrival at Bobbio to start with me for the Col.

The ascent begins a few paces behind Bobbio. You pass the church, with its white gable and square tower; you traverse the gardens of the little hamlet, and then you find yourself beneath the famous rock of Sibaud. We shall have occasion to notice this historic site again. It figures in the story of the Glorious Return; for here the eight hundred encamped after their famous march across the Alps through myriads of foes; and here, with uplifted hands, they swore to abide steadfast in the profession of their faith—to take no spoil for their own private use—to be true to one another—and to establish themselves in their native Valleys, or die in the attempt. This was a transaction precisely similar in its spirit, as in its form, to the “Solemn League and Covenant” which our Puritan and Covenanting forefathers had entered into, a few years before, in Britain, when something like the same perfidious game was being attempted to be played against them which the House of Savoy was now playing against the Vaudois. This was



called the "Oath of Sibaud;" and the spot where it was sworn is a ledge of rock, rising a hundred feet or so over the level of the valley, and looking out from amidst the chestnut woods that clothe the lower slopes of the Col Julien.

The day was cloudless, the heat in the valley was great; but the branching arms of the great chestnut trees, amid which our path at the outset lay, sheltered us from the sun. The path, a mere mule-track, ploughed by torrents in winter, and covered mostly with debris, runs in zigzags up the hill, which rises above us in mighty ridges and bold precipitous headlands, crowned with chalets and clumps of great trees. Occasionally we emerge on fields of fine clover. For the woods are not continuous, but alternate with fields of maize and wheat, potatoes, pasturages, and all the various productions which the rich mould on the hill-side, and the abundant water and sun, enable the Vandois peasant to cultivate in great luxuriance. The farm-houses are frequent, and the path, for hours, winds from one to another, and leads you sometimes past their very thresholds. No one till he ascends these mountains can form an idea how populous they are, and how great

an extent of corn land and fruit-bearing soil they contain.

Soon we ascended to a great height. Beneath us was Bobbio, a speck of brown. There was the Valley of Luserna, a ribbon of green with a thread of silver woven into it, lying along amidst mighty masses of rock and forest. There were the great mountains around the Valley of Rora standing up in the silent sky; and there were the spiky crags that bristle along the Pass of Mirabouc; and yonder, in the east, a glimpse of the mighty sweep of the plains of Piedmont.

We now left the mountain's face, and struck in upon its centre. The path, gently ascending, ran along the steep side of a ravine that pierced the hill to a great depth. We saw an occasional farmhouse: we saw, too, some rich cultivation; but towards the head of the ravine its sides were covered with loose stones, and land-slips had occasionally obliterated the path. We had a torrent beneath us, and its rushings were not unwelcome amid these solitudes. Myriads of lizards were basking in the path: you would see them by dozens on a single stone; but the instant you came up they were off, and dived out of sight amid the debris in the

path. And there were large wild-flowers, "the Forget-me-not" and "the Rose of the Alps," as rich in bloom and as sweet of fragrance in these wilds as if they grew where man's eye could see and admire their beauty every hour of the day. At last we arrived at the head of the ravine.

It ended in a sort of bifurcation: fronting us was a grassy headland, and, on either side a ravine, branching off up-hill, each with its torrent, which came tumbling down amid bristling rocks, and, uniting with its fellow at the foot of the headland, formed the stream which had been our companion all up the valley. Whether should we ascend by the right or the left-hand ravine?

I felt how utterly helpless I must have been without a guide—that, in fact, to have got across the Col would have been an utter impossibility. I must have returned or wandered for days, and, it might be, weeks amid the ample and trackless solitudes of the mountain. In the valley, with the mountain's summit full in view, rising cloudless and sunny in the firmament, I had thought there could be no great difficulty in finding my way up to it, and had even entertained the hazardous notion of attempting it alone. The look of astonish-

ment with which every mention of my purpose was received taught me to reconsider it; and now, when climbing the mountain, I felt how well it was I had done so. The summit I could not see. Now I was treading forest; now tracking ravine and gorge; now bewildering mists would descend and close in around me, and anon they would rise again; now blind paths, in twos and threes, would run off from the right track, and lead out into an illimitable extent of grassy, pathless upland; and when summits did appear, they came in dozens, and you could not even guess which was the right one, or tell whether, having clomb these, you might not encounter others higher still. I felt, in short, that I could as soon have found my way across the ocean, without compass or star, to the south pole, as cross the Col Julien without a guide.

On the north side the mountain is more deceptive still. There it runs right up in a steep but practicable ascent, which the eye of one at the bottom can distinctly trace all the way to the top. Accordingly an English traveller, in 1852, was led to attempt it alone. All went well till he got to the pass, but, in descending towards Bobbio, he missed the path, and found himself suddenly brought up.

by a precipice that ran sheer down some hundred fathoms. To complete his perplexity, although he had managed to get down to this ledge, it was impossible to get back. The path was frightfully precipitous, and to have retraced it would have been destruction. Here he stood, fixed in the face of the mountain like a statue in its niche, shouting at the top of his voice, and making signs with his umbrella, if haply some one from below might see or hear him.

It happened that a boy, who had led his goats to the bottom of the mountain, was attracted by these cries and signals of distress, and, looking up, saw something like the figure of a man at a great height above him. On his return home in the evening, he told his master what he had seen, or thought he had seen. The boy was only laughed at. "Impossible! how could any one ever have got there?" said his master: "the chamois could not have climbed such a precipice." The boy went next day to the same spot, and saw and heard the same signs and cries, only the cries were fainter. When he went home at night he told the same tale, adding, that he was now surer than ever that it was a man. "What like were his

cries?" he was asked. "Like those of a goat," replied the boy. "Poor boy! you are getting crazed when you cannot distinguish betwixt a man's voice and a goat's." The boy was put to bed. In the night he fell a-dreaming, and awoke in a state of high excitement, crying out that he had been at the mountain again—that he had heard the poor man's cries; and he implored them to go and rescue him. The master now began to be alarmed; and, when day broke, he assembled his neighbours, and, providing himself with ropes, repaired to the mountain and rescued the traveller, who was now scarce able, by word or sign, to intimate his distress. The Englishman refused to give his name, but left a handsome reward with the farmer. This gift the farmer deemed wholly his, to the exclusion of the goatherd, having drawn up the man from his mountain prison; but the matter coming to the ears of General Beckwith, he resolved that the boy should not go unrewarded, and accordingly lodged a sum of money for this purpose in the hands of Dr Revel, which, much to the boy's delight, was suitably applied. This narrative I had from Dr Revel, when passing under the spot that morning on our way to Bobbio, as a

warning to myself and all future travellers not to attempt alone these passes of their mountains.

We struck into the right-hand ravine. The path went winding up its sides, over bare rock and loose stones. Great needles of rock shot up from its bottom, and towered above us to the height of several hundred feet. The torrent leaped down in white cascades. We toiled upwards, and now we looked down on the pinnacles which, half-an-hour before, had looked down on us. Other needles still, tall as the former, rose above us. We climbed up to these airy spires, and they, in their turn, sank beneath our feet. This process we repeated again and again. At last we came out upon the downs that clothe the shoulders of the mountain, and, sitting down on the grass, we refreshed ourselves with the simple fare we had brought with us. My guide drew forth a supply of bread and cheese, both somewhat dark, but exceedingly palatable eaten here, with these crags beneath us. To these dainties I was able to add bread, butter, and boiled eggs. The nearest runnel supplied us with drink.

In days not long gone by the Waldenses had been condemned for holding the fearful heresy

that rain water is as efficacious as holy water. When I remembered what I had seen in marble basins at cathedral doors, with its layer of sediment at bottom and its coating of oil atop, and compared it with the living crystal flowing here amidst rock and sward, I was in no little danger of falling into the same heresy. I could not doubt, at all events, which of the two—the cathedral font or the mountain runnel—was the more cleanly.

We again gave ourselves to the way, which went winding upward, through a boundless extent of grassy slopes and wavy knolls and ridges, towards the summit of the pass, which was as yet invisible. We had entered the region of the herdsmen, and could hear, in the deep silence, their voices afar off, and the tinkling bells of their kine. My guide, an intelligent as well as kind and attentive man (qualities for which the Vaudois guides are famed), entertained me with accounts of the manner of life led by these herdsmen upon the mountains. They go forth in the end of April, when spring dissolves the snows and anew clothes the Alps with grass and flowers. They rise higher and higher with their flocks as the pasturage permits. Each colony is attended by one or two



females, the wives or sisters of the herdsmen, whose duty it is to curdle the milk brought daily from the flock, and convert it into cheese. We passed one of these dairies, at a great height on the mountain. The Vaudois excel all the other herdsmen of the Alps in the breed and management of their flocks, in the arrangement of their dairies, and in the cleanliness of their mountain cabins, as any one may satisfy himself who will take the trouble to visit them in their Alpine abodes. They tie a bell round the neck of each heifer, lest it should stray and be lost in these solitudes. When winter sets in, these herdsmen descend with their flocks to the plain by the same stages by which they rose. The stock belonging to the population of the Val Pelice numbered, in 1829, 3848 head of cattle, and 11,250 sheep and goats, and about 180 mules. Since that year their prosperity has been great, and we may now fairly estimate their stock at 7000 head of cattle, 20,000 sheep and goats, and from 200 to 300 mules.

We held on our way over these boundless wilds, steering towards the pass. The scene became one of stupendous and inexpressible grandeur. No words can describe it. To be conceived of, in its

full magnificence, it must be seen. Away to the east were the plains of Piedmont, green as garden, level as ocean, and almost as boundless. But the multitude and majesty of mountains that filled the rest of the horizon cannot be told. Below were the gorges, the dark pine forests, and, peering up, were the bald headlands and spiky pinnacles which form the lower buttresses of the great mountain. Around us was a sea of great Alps, infinite in their forms, and indescribable in their majesty and sublimity: escarped summits, piles of crags, needles, dark peaks, snow-white domes—conspicuous among which were the summits of Monte Friolante and the Col de Malure on the south, the Col de la Croix on the west, and the Col la Vechera on the east. This last the eye hails with peculiar pleasure, as bringing with it the remembrance of the little green valley which nestles at its feet, in which the venerable Barbes were wont to dwell. The sight is one of magnificence, boundless as tumultuous—of grandeur as wild, terrible, overpowering as man's eye ever rested on. Its crowning and consummating feature remains to be told. High above the rest, alone in the sky, in a robe of silver radiant as seraph's, stood up Monte Viso.

It presented itself in bold relief against the ebon vault, and looked strangely near. Its white gleam seemed to fall upon me.

We next crossed acres and acres of loose flat stones. Hard by these were the dairies. Their walls rose but a few feet above the ground, and their roofs had some tons' weight of stones piled upon them — doubtless to enable them to withstand the tempests that occasionally sweep along this region of the mountain.

A raking mist, which, viewed from the valley, would have been clouds, now came along from the west. This presented the scenery under new aspects—sometimes grotesque, and sometimes inexpressibly sublime. The mist would close in and leave only a few yards of the mountain visible; then it would part, and reveal some distant gorge or mountain peak, on which the sun seemed to be pouring a flood of golden light. Again it would scatter and break up before the breeze, and hang before you like a tattered screen, through the rents of which you could see a broken picture of the Alps, all tinted and glorified with the sun. Cut off from their earthly bases, they seemed to float in mid-heaven. And, again, a single shaft would

pierce the dull vapour, through which, as through a long tube, might be seen afar, a very far off, a world of glory—a celestial city, with domes, and palaces, and spires, and cincturing battlements, on which the sun shone with ineffable splendour. Wordsworth has grandly described a similar scene:—

“ A step,  
 A single step, that freed me from the skirts  
 Of the blind vapour, open'd to my view  
 Glory beyond all glory ever seen  
 By waking sense or by the dreaming soul !  
 The appearance instantaneously disclosed,  
 As of a mighty city—boldly say  
 A wilderness of building, sinking far  
 And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth,  
 Far sinking into splendour—without end !  
 Fabric it seem'd of diamond and of gold,  
 With alabaster domes, and silver spires,  
 And blazing terrace upon terrace, high  
 Uplifted : here, serene pavilions bright,  
 In avenues disposed ; there, towers begirt  
 With battlements that on their restless fronts  
 Bore stars—illumination of all gems !  
 By earthly nature had the effect been wrought  
 Upon the dark materials of the storm  
 Now pacified.”

A few minutes now brought us to the bottom of the last ascent. The path does not lead over the supreme summit, but over a saddle-like depression betwixt two summits. To scale the pass you have

to climb a slope, upright as roof, and covered with short smooth grass. The ascent, which we made on our hands and knees, occupied us the better part of an hour. We rested in the middle of it, and enjoyed the novelty of the position. The clouds were moving beneath us; the great Alps stood up above the vapour like islands in a white sea. Of a sudden the clouds would part, and reveal, in the abyss-like opening, the mountain gorges, or its pastures sprinkled over with flocks and herds.

The silence is like no silence you have ever felt before. It is something palpable and fearful. You feel as if the great clock of nature had stopped: as if its tickings even had ceased. Dwellers in cities and in plains can form no conception of it. Walk out into the fields at midnight and analyse the silence around you; you will find it is made up of a multitude of minute noises, all mingled together—the rustle of the leaves, the rushing of some distant brook, the creaking cart of some belated waggoner, the baying of the watch-dog, the sounds of human voices mayhap—it is, in short, not silence, but noise vastly subdued. But on the summit of the Alps it is silence—real substantial silence—that surrounds you; and you are affrighted

at a thing so unwonted. You feel that the total absence of sound is as awe-inspiring a thing as the total absence of light—that silence is as terrible as darkness. Every object at which you look has a deathlike muteness, an unnatural stillness. It is awful to sit here and look up at that mountain, and think of the unbroken, voiceless silence in which it stands all day long in the firmament! You begin to have a mysterious dread of it.

But here are flowers. With what a quiet, trustful air they look up in the silence! One wishes they could but speak to one. Mark that Alpine rose: how bright its petals! How full the world is of beauty! Where can you go where you will not find flowers? Amid the snows of the pole? the summits of the Alps? Even on yonder torn peak, where the human foot never trod, you would find, were you to climb upward to it, the lichen striving to weave round the bare stone a fairy garland of rainbow hues. Among the more recent revelations of science is the touching fact, that flowers appeared on the earth shortly before man. The rose was his immediate precursor. How affecting! God sowed the earth with flowers; it was man who sowed it with tears.

And here, too, comes the bee, levying its honied tribute upon the flowers of these Alpine heights. Let me greet thee, thou venturous fellow-traveller. And have thy little wings borne thee up to these heights? and thou camest singing all the way, through the black gorge, and the pine forest, and over the great rocky pinnacles? Didst thou not fear the avalanche, or the tempest, or the bolt of the thunder? What a courageous heart thou carriest in that little body of thine! Thanks for the lessons thou teachest me, and which it is worth while climbing all this way to learn. How far may a song go to lighten heavy burden, and shorten long journey! and how much may one, with but ordinary powers and singleness of purpose, do to benefit the world!

The free air of the mountains is good for one's thoughts. They fall less into the common rut than when one is in the world below. Seated here, with Italy, France, and Austria at our feet, we begin to have opinions on various subjects, which it might not be convenient to carry about with us at lower altitudes, at least to give utterance to. We look down on the great stage beneath us with a feeling of mingled contempt and pity. There are

the nations staggering along like over-burdened asses. Yonder is Spain fairly landed in the ditch. And there are the Romans: how they sprawl and splutter in the fisherman's net, said net being of steel. Look here: how kindly the gallant French take to the cudgel, the only instrument now employed to govern human cattle. And yonder: how meekly the Austrians kiss the toe, or any part they are bidden, of Infallibility. But who is this? There goes the Shepherd of the Tiber, with his well-shorn flock and his two mastiffs—his Neapolitan bull-dog and his Tuscan colley. Verily, knaves and knaveries have a grand time of it. But these musings are only for the hill-top of course.

But let us up. Another twenty minutes' climbing brings us to the top of the pass. We bid adieu to the southern plain, with its groaning nations, beneath that ocean of cloud, out of which rise these grand summits, and we turn our face towards the north. The mountain runs down in a vast and steep slope, covered first with grass, next with bushes, next scattered firs, and far, far below lies the Valley of Prali. Confronting us stands another range of Alps, with the higher peaks tipped with snow. We gave ourselves to the



descent, and went tumbling down the mountain, clutching at the shrubs to prevent our gathering too much way. Wet we were with perspiration, as if, instead of the sun, we had been travelling all day in an Alpine shower; and I may here put on record for the benefit of other travellers a very simple method of drying one's self. My guide, taking off his coat and vest, threw himself flat on his face, and invited me to do the same. I obeyed. The western sun beat full and hot upon our backs, and in twenty minutes our linens were perfectly dry. The traveller will find this not only a delightful refreshment at the time, but an excellent preventive of future evils.

We reached the bottom of the mountain as the sun went down behind the vast mass of the Col de Abries. My guide, who was to sleep that night in a mountain chalet on his way to Bobbio, here took leave of me, and I went on my way to the village of Prali, which soon came in sight. The Valley of Prali is high-lying; its climate is less hot, its productions less luxuriant than those of the Valleys I had just left on the south of the mountain. The chestnut does not grow here. The harvest, which was over three weeks before

in the other Valleys, was only in progress in Prali, and the peasants, who had been engaged reaping all day, were returning from the fields with great burdens of sheaves on their back. The possession of a mule or any beast of burden is rare here, and the peasants must themselves do the work which in other countries is done by horses. A tolerable road led along on the margin of a fine river, formed of innumerable torrents that came rolling down from the great snow-clad hills that shut in the valley on the west. At every mile's distance or so I passed a village, seated on the lower slope of the mountain. A stone's-cast off the road, seated amid quiet green meadows, was the little hamlet of Prali, with the shadows of the great Alps closing in around it. Evening and rest—meet companionship—had come together. Cowper's wish was mine, and that wish was being realised—

“Come, Evening, once again, season of peace;  
Return, sweet Evening, and continue long!  
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,  
With matron step slow moving, while the Night  
Treads on thy sweeping train; one hand employ'd  
In letting fall the curtain of repose  
On bird and beast, the other charged for man  
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day:  
Not sumptuously adorn'd, not needing aid,  
Like homely featured Night, of clust'ring gems:

A star or two, just twinkling on thy brow,  
Suffices thee."

Turning off on the right, and traversing a pleasant bypath through the meadows, I reached the hamlet of Prali, and found in the presbytere a warm welcome from the family of Pastor Muston.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## Valley of Prall.

Bracing Power of Mountain Air—Picture of the Valley—Start for San Martino—Rocky Defile—A Mountain Hamlet—A Higher—Arrangement of the Vaudois Hills, as seen from thence—The Mountain Top—View from thence—A Pine Forest—Difficulty—Descent to Macel.

I AWOKE at seven next morning, Saturday the 22d of August, fresh and ready for the road. There is a wonderful bracing power in the air of these mountains. I had been eleven hours on foot the day before, all of which nearly had been passed in hard climbing ; but already all traces of fatigue were gone, and I should not have been much put about though I had found another Col Julien in the programme of the day's march.

I stepped out on the balcony of M. Muston's dwelling while breakfast was getting ready. It was a glorious morning. The Alps on the south pro-

jected into the valley a deep, massy shadow, which crept up closer and closer to the mountains as the sun mounted higher and higher above the dark and towering line of their summits. The opposite chain shone gloriously in the morning beams. The dew was on the meadows ; the air was cool as compared with the hotter climate of Luserna ; the river sped onwards with rapid tumultuous flow, its waves dancing in the light ; the bottom of the valley and the lower region of the mountains presented a fine mosaic, formed of the golden yellow of the barley, the bright emerald of the pastures, the dull brown of the numerous hamlets, and the dark shadows of the pine forests. Upon all looked down the great white peaks at the head of the valley. Prali cannot compare with Luserna as regards its gorgeous fruitage and rich sublimity of mountain scenery. But it had a grandeur of its own—severe, chaste, imposing.

I started at eight ; M. Muston kindly accompanying me a couple of miles. The valley at this extremity is much narrower than at the other, where the Col de Abries stands like warrior clad in glittering mail. A varied patchwork of grain and pasture land clothes its bottom, and runs up

its slopes ; a shaggy belt of fir-woods comes next, lying along upon the mountain's face ; above all, stand up the great summits.

We now enter a narrow and winding defile, rough, rocky, and feathery as any pass in the Scottish Highlands. The only clear space in the narrow bottom is the road ; the rest is covered every inch with great boulders, which storms and avalanches have torn from the mountain's crest, and sent thundering down into the vale—excepting, of course, the bed of the torrent, which here, somewhat straitened, grows angrier in its chafings. Innumerable dark conical crests of rock, bristling with firs, look down upon you, finely picturesque in their general effect.

You emerge in a chasm-like valley. It is enclosed by debris-covered hills, whose nakedness a few straggling firs strive ineffectually to hide. The wide expanse of cheerless gray before the eye gives a peculiar sweetness to the patch of deep green surrounding the little village that now comes in sight, at the foot of the mountain on the left.

You turn off the road to ascend to the village. At the point of divergence a great rock rises right in the path ; and to permit the road to continue its

course, the rock has been cleft in twain, and the dissevered portions stand on either side, looking like door-posts which had belonged to some colossal fabric now fallen. Looking through this gate of rock, you can see the path winding abruptly down into a deep shady gorge, with the stream thundering through it in a white torrent, and the naked mountains rising tall above it, and ending in spiky pinnacles. This gorge forms a long vista, looking through which you have an enchanting distant glimpse of fine mountains, with the warm sunlight flecking their sides, and white fleecy clouds playing among their firs. Fain would you descend and traverse the gorge, but the path lies not that way.

An ascent of ten minutes brought me to the village. I found it seated on an enormous ledge of rock that juts out on the side of the mountain. The rock was carpeted with a fine sward, and traversed by more than one mountain rivulet, pure as crystal. The maidens of the place were turning to the best account the living waters, and were spreading out their newly-washed clothes in the sun—white as their own mountain snows. A narrow street went winding through the hamlet, which

stood massed together as if it feared there were not room enough on the mountain's side. Were its houses to open out a little, the vast slope would still not be unduly occupied, and the hamlet would inhale all the more freely the fine air of the mountains, of which it would be none the worse. Looking back, the valley through which I had passed took much the character of a gorge. What I had imagined a mere cliff, nodding over the path, was now seen to be a fine pyramidal hill, decked out in rows of firs, and occupying the centre of a segment formed of other hills also pyramidal-shaped, and feathery with firs. The road by which I had come looked like a white thread tied round the bottom of the mountain.

Above this village was another, at some considerable height on the side of the mountain. I ascended to it by zigzags, raised on terraces of stone. When ascending to this village, I had a fine opportunity of studying the arrangement of these mountains, and of satisfying myself as to the amount of fruit-bearing soil which lies concealed amongst them, and which is far greater than one who confines his wanderings to the bottom of the valleys can have any idea of. Had I contented myself with simply



passing along through the valley of Prali I should have thought of it as being but a narrow strip of pasturage and corn land, lying within mountains covered only with pine forests and great rocks; but now I found that I had seen but a portion of its arable soil. Looking across to the mountains opposite, I could see on the top of what, when in the valley below, I had taken to be naked precipices ending in the clouds, a large plateau, with a village, and several hundreds of acres of corn land lying around it. Running out from the plateau were other straths, each with its village or villages, and their accompanying corn-fields and plantations of fruit-trees. The traveller below sees nothing of all this. To him the country is like a map folded up and put into its box. He wonders where the many thousands of the Waldenses can dwell, or where the corn can grow that is to feed them. It is only when you climb the mountains that the country unfolds itself. There opens to your delighted eye more than silent wilds and solitary herdsmen. Straths gleaming with ripening grain, slopes shady with fruit trees, and vocal with the noise of falling torrents, stretch out before you; while dotting these high-lying valleys are

numerous farm-houses, with their crystal rivulet hard by, murmuring within their fringe of verdure. Every such strath has, too, its own special scenery—its fairy nooks, never visited by tourists, its wild crags and its dark summits—of which it is possible the traveller may catch a glimpse, as the valley opens momentarily to his eye as he hurries past.

As the morning wore on the heat increased. At last, in three hours or so from starting, I gained the summit of the hill. The view, of course, had little of the grandeur of the Col Julien; still it was fine, and in any other country would have been deemed superb. Rising afar on the right—that is, in a south-west direction—were the peaked summits at the head of the Valley of Angrogna. Silent they stood, as if still guarding the reverend steps of the Barbes in their famous Pra. The snows of their summit glittered in the sun, and ran in long lines of silver down their sides. Below was seen the deep gulf of Prali, reposing within a broad fringe of pine woods, and a rough and grand setting of naked peaks. Nearer was the narrow gorge through which I had emerged from Prali, with its line of path still visible, and its

bright silvery thread of a torrent. Across the valley, reposing on the shoulder of the opposite mountain, and lying now beneath me, was the plateau of which I have spoken, with its corn-fields and village; and, in the background, the mass of the mountain, with troops of white clouds passing along, half way betwixt the mountain hamlet and the dark peaks that rose above it. Stainless they looked, and slow and stately they moved on, in long array, through the blue sky, reminding one of Wordsworth's beautiful description of a procession of white-vested maidens in the Vale of Chamouni :—

“ Even such, this day, came wafted on the breeze  
 From a long train—in hooded vestments fair  
 Enwrapt—and winding, between Alpine trees  
 Spiry and dark, around their House of prayer,  
 Below the icy bed of bright Argentine.

\* \* \* \* \*

Not virgin lilies marshal'd in bright row,  
 Not swans descending with the stealthy tide,  
 A livelier sisterly resemblance shew  
 Than the fair Forms, that in long order glide.”

On the east the view was fine. Alp rose above Alp, presenting a gradation that was worthier being styled the Giant's Staircase than those famous steps in Venice to which the name has been

given. Towering over all rose the lofty, escarped mountain that hangs its torn, colossal crest wavelike over Pignerollo.

Scooped out on the brow of the mountain on which I stood was an immense basin, containing the village I had just passed, and the fields of arable soil that helped to supply it with bread. There might be about a hundred acres or so, covered with a various crop of corn, potatoes, and pease, busy among which were the reapers gathering their harvest. Around this plat, forming the rim of the basin, were a series of small conical heights, strewn with mica-slate, in which a few bushes found footing.

A few steps across the brow of the hill opened to my view the country beyond. Deep, deep, below me, lay the Valley of Roderetto and the opening of the Valley of San Martino. Across these valleys, directly fronting me, and towering high above the hill on which I stood, was a chain of mighty Alps. The bottom of the valley I could not see, by reason of a forest of great firs that rose within a few paces of me, and ran a long way down the mountain. I was altogether unable to determine how I should steer for Macel, which

was to be the termination of my first stage for the day. Four paths traversed the wood. Which should I take? My first impulse was to shout to the peasants; but they were too distant for my voice to reach them. Accordingly, carefully observing the sun before plunging into the forest, I chose the path that seemed most trodden.

I am not the first who has done wrong in following the multitude. I was getting deeper and deeper in the forest, and the path was vanishing. I resolved to strike right across, in the hope of lighting upon one of the other paths. I came at length upon a large open space, where the trees had been felled and burned into charcoal. I judged that the path from this spot must lead down to one of the villages at the bottom. The mountain-berries were here very abundant, and I gathered and ate them, and most refreshing they were in the heat. Often have these same berries formed the food of Vaudois for weeks together, when hunted on these mountains. I comforted myself with the thought that I should not want for food, however long I might wander in this pine forest, and the quaint old lines came to my mind—

" Hence, hence, distracting care of earthly thing,  
 Hence, base distrust of God's great providence ;  
 The little birds that can do naught but sing  
 Have plenteous foode from his beneficence.  
 Is He to little birds so gracious Father,  
 And shall wee, children, want our daily food ?  
 We that haue means to sow, to reap, to gather,  
 Shall we make question of His bountihood ?  
 Nay ; though meanes faile, yet we will not despaire ;  
 Eagles haue fed His children—His elect  
 Kate manna in the desarts that were bare ;  
 He multiplied the oile of the Sarept ;  
 He gaue vs bodies not to starue and perish ;  
 He gaue us life, which doubtless Hee will cherish."

I pursued the track that continued to lead downwards. At last I could see, through betwixt the firs, the gleam of corn-fields. Soon I came out upon an open region, covered with grain, potatoes, and other fruits, amid which the peasants were busied ; and in a little I reached the bottom of the valley, with its thundering torrent, and its numerous hamlets, of which Macel must be one.

I touched the valley at the point where Roderetto ends and San Martino begins. Mountains of tremendous height bounded it ; indeed their summits mostly were lost in the clouds, and so narrow was the space betwixt them, that one could almost have thrown a stone from the one mountain side to the opposing one. The greater warmth and

the more luxuriant vegetation apprise the visitor that he is now in a more low lying valley than Prali. In Prali I had seen neither vines nor chestnuts. Here were both—the vine clustering round the rocks, and the noble chestnut casting its goodly shadow on the earth. I held on my way along the valley for some two or three miles. The path, rough indeed, wound along the banks of the torrent, now under a thicket of foliage, now over a rustic bridge, and now along a ledge of rock, where the stream rolled along in foam some thousand feet below me. Climbing to a little hamlet, the Champ le Salse, on the left of the stream, I reached the temporary manse of the pastor of Macel, M. Turin.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

*Valley of San Martino—The Exile.*

M. Turin—Dinner—Walk to the Balsile—Grandeur of Val Balsiglia—Its Associations—Its Rich Fruitage—Its Mountain Grandeur—The Balsile—New Troubles—Louis XIV. and Victor Amadeus—Defenceless Condition of the Waldenses—They first Fight, then Surrender—The whole Nation thrown into Prison—Horrors of the Imprisonment—The Release—The Exile—Their Journey across the Alps—Its Hardships—City of Calvin.

WITH M. Turin I was already well acquainted by name. He had passed some years at Constantinople as a missionary from the Waldensian Synod, he had, if I mistake not, been too in the Crimea, and I had seen him often mentioned in connexion with mission operations. I was all the more delighted on that account to make his personal acquaintance in his own mountains. He had come to Macel but two weeks before. For it is a custom, descending from the good old times of the Barbes, to station the youngest men in the more



mountainous charges, where bodily vigour is needed in visiting their flocks, and to move them down to the lower valleys as they grow in years and experience. M. Turin had the frank manner and enlarged ideas of one who had seen a good deal of men. Thanks to the liberality of an English lady who had visited the Valleys the summer before, an elegant manse was in course of erection for the pastor of Macel, across the valley, on the other side of the stream; and the house occupied by M. Turin was but a temporary residence. One of its two rooms was abundantly littered with books, just unpacked, in the Italian, French, English, and German languages. He himself spoke a little English.

My welcome was most cordial. Although it was Saturday afternoon, M. Turin insisted that I should dine with him, and that afterwards he should be my *cicerone* to the Balsile. The schoolmaster waited on us at table: I had much rather that he had sat down with us, and that one had helped one's-self; but so is the custom of the Valleys. "You are in the mountains now," said M. Turin, "and you must dine on what our Valleys yield." This was no punishment truly. Macca-

roni, potatoes, butter, and cheese of the best, and good wine, made a delightful repast. We now started for the famous Balsile, or castle, so renowned in Vaudois story as the scene of their last and most determined struggle. Leaving Champ le Salse, we traversed a narrow path that wound high on the side of the valley, through corn-fields and vineyards, and which brought into view, across the deep gorge, the temple of Macel, with the fine new presbytère rising beside it. We next turned into a valley not surpassed in grandeur by anything I had yet seen. This was the Valley of Balsiglia, an offshoot of the Valley of San Martino, at the head of which is the mountain on which the heroic Henri Arnaud, and the "eight hundred" who had returned with him from exile, made their last stand; and, though pursued and hemmed in by two armies—that of France and that of Savoy—they here made good their defence all through the winter of 1689, amid all its snows and famine; and when their position was no longer tenable—their dykes having been battered down by the cannon which their enemies were compelled to drag up the mountains, where cannon had never been before, to dislodge them—they re-

treated over the Col Julien, to hear in a few days how God had wonderfully interposed in their behalf, by dividing the counsels of their enemies and moving the heart of their own prince to make peace with them, and so permit of their re-establishing themselves in their own much-loved land.

The valley opens suddenly and grandly. It rises like a temple, vast and venerable. Step into St Peter's at Rome, you are awed by its size—its floor so vast of sweep, its columns so massive and strong, its roof hung at so wondrous a height overhead, and its glorious dome, with the sunlight pouring in through it upon statue and picture! But how many hundreds of thousands St Peters would it take to form a temple like the Val di Balsiglia, with hundreds of acres of meadow-land for its floor, with superbly-hung mountain terraces for its walls, its crowning rampart of splintered cliffs and dark peaks, and its golden shafts streaming in through glorious shadows?

I have called it a temple; and in few temples on earth has such worship been offered as has been offered here. To bow the knee and to uplift the psalm, as we do weekly in our sanctuaries, costs us little. We find our enjoyment in these exercises;

but the worship presented here was one of toil and blood. It was themselves which these Christian patriots here offered on the altar of their country. Nobler anthem this than ever rolled through cathedral aisle, and sweeter incense by far than ever ascended to fretted roof or vaulted dome. Still the spirits of these men seem to inhabit the scene of their former achievements, and to invest with sacred interest every rock, and stream, and mountain peak of the valley. Of them we may say, what the poet has finely said of another heroic race, though less heroic than the Waldenses; for certainly the "return" of the "eight hundred" was a yet nobler exploit than the march of the "ten thousand:"—

"The waters murmur'd of their name;  
The woods were peopled with their fame;  
Their spirits wrapt the dusky mountain;  
Their mem'ry sparkled o'er the fountain;  
The meanest rill, the mightiest river,  
Roll'd mingling with their fame for ever."

But let us give the reader a nearer view of this famous spot. You have before you a level bottom, of some five miles in length with from one to two in width. It is closed by the naked face of a perpendicular mountain, down which the Germanasca

is seen to dash in a flood of silver; and overtopping it are dark peaks, which rise dimly yet grandly amid rolling clouds, through which beams of splendour flow down upon the wild scenery. The meadows and woods that cover the bottom are seamed by a broad line of white, formed by the noble torrent, the Germanasca, the bed of which is strewn with so numerous rocks that it looks a continuous river of foam. Nothing could be finer than the enclosing walls of this valley. On the right, a flight of terraced vineyards runs up to a considerable height on the mountain. We saw noble vine-stocks stretching out their goodly boughs, laden with numerous clusters not yet ripe; for the time of grapes was not fully come. The hills were covered with the shadow of the vine, intermixed, however, with grain crops giving their golden gleam; and massy knolls of rock, crowned with cottage or hamlet, which looked out from amid their rich embowerings of chestnut and apple-tree. Above this fruit-bearing zone rose the grassy uplands, the retreat of herdsmen, which gave place in their turn to ridges of rock, which rose in wavy and serrated lines, and ran off to the higher summits, which receded into the clouds.

On the left, the mountain wall is more abrupt and steep, but equally rich in its clothing. Swathing its foot is a fine carpeting of delicious clover, which, shaven with scythe, gives to portions of the valley the beautifully dressed air of a nobleman's park. Noble trees, with their glossy trunks and great o'erarching branches, part with their shadows the bright sunlight ;

“ While beneath  
The chequer'd earth seems restless as a flood  
Brush'd by the wind. So sportive is the light  
Shot through the boughs, it dances as they dance,  
Shadow and sunshine intermingling quick,  
And darkening and enlightening, as the leaves  
Play wanton, every moment, every spot.”

Higher on the mountain were fields of maize, patches of stubble land, and forests of chestnut ; and, higher still, the rock-loving birch, with its silvery stem and graceful tresses. Above, many thousand feet over the level of the valley, the naked mountain ran along in a line of splintered cliffs, cleft with *crevasses*, and topped with a bristling margin of firs—a mighty *chevaux-de-frise*.

Towards the head of the valley on the left, and not far from the great wall of rock that shuts it in, was a glorious assemblage of mountains. One mighty cone uplifted itself above and behind ano-

ther, till the last and highest buried its summit in the rolling masses of cloud which canopied this part of the valley. These noble *aiguilles*, four in number, rose feathery with firs, and reminded one of the fretted pinnacles of colossal cathedral. The sun shot his rays through amid the clouds, and the mountains stood up beneath them, transfigured in the beams which were falling in floods of glory upon their sides. I had had my first sight of the Balsile; for this mountain that rose, peak on peak, fleckered with heaven's gold, was the same on which Henri Arnaud had pitched his camp, amid the dark tempests of winter, and the yet darker tempests of a furious and armed bigotry. The Balsile is no castle of man's erecting; it had for its builder the Almighty Architect himself.

Behind the Balsile, on the west, rose the lofty Mont Guignevert. I could only see the vast slope of his dark sides as they rose into the firmament and became lost in the clouds. He permitted that afternoon no sight of his grandeur. He dwelt alone in a tabernacle of cloud. Opposite to him, across the valley, rose the yet loftier Col du Pis; but the nearer mountains intercepted the sight of his summit. Here stand these two

great Alps, like twin giants, guarding their famous valley.

But it is time to speak of the events of which it has been the theatre. After the Great Massacre of 1655, the Churches in the Valleys had rest thirty years,—if a period of ceaseless intrigues on the part of their enemies, and of continual alarms, which necessitated the Vaudois to prosecute their labours often with the musket slung by their side, can be called rest. In 1685 a new storm burst. This tempest had its first rise beyond the Alps. Louis XIV., with his latter end in view, consulted his confessor by what good deed as a king he might atone for his debaucheries as a man, and was told that he must extirpate Protestantism in France.

The Grand Monarque, before whom Europe trembled, bowed obsequiously before the shaven crown of a priest. The Edict of Nantes was revoked. By the same stroke of his pen he swept away the natural and civil rights of his Protestant subjects, amounting to many hundred thousands, and opened the door for that dismal succession of woes which have since passed over that unhappy kingdom, and of which we have not yet seen the end. Wishing to have companionship in this good work,



he demanded that Victor Amadeus, Duke of Savoy, should deal with the Waldenses as he was now dealing with the Huguenots. The Duke demurred. He had just addressed a letter to the Valleys, thanking them for the effective assistance they had given him in the war with the Genoese just ended. But the King of France, or rather Father La Chaise his confessor, would take no denial. He told the Duke, that if he did not choose to purge his dominions from heresy, he would do it for him, with an army of 14,000 men, and keep the Valleys for his trouble.

Victor Amadeus, thus told that he was not the Pope's friend, like Pilate, gave way ; and accordingly, on the 31st of January 1686, came an edict from Turin, enjoining the Waldenses, under pain of death and confiscation of goods—1. To cease and discontinue, henceforth and for ever, all exercise of their religion ; 2. To raze to the ground all churches, poor's-houses, and other edifices consecrated to their worship ; 3. To banish all their pastors and schoolmasters ; 4. To have their children henceforth baptized by the curé, under pain to the mother of being publicly flogged, and to the father of five years in the galleys. The edict, moreover,

formally abolished all their ancient privileges, and offered the miserable bribe of a third more stipend to every Waldensian pastor who should abjure. The Waldenses sent deputies to Turin, respectfully to remind the Duke that they had inhabited their Valleys before the House of Savoy ascended the throne of Piedmont; and that they were secured in the free profession of their religion by innumerable treaties, which had been sanctioned by oaths. These representations were seconded by a deputation from the Evangelical Cantons of the Swiss Union. But all was in vain. Despite the intercession of deputies and the obligation of oaths, the unrighteous decree must be executed; and in a little space the armies of France and Savoy, 20,000 strong, arrived in the Valleys.

Seldom had the Waldenses been more completely without the help of man. Janavel, whose stout heart and strong arm had stood them in such stead formerly, was now an exile. Cromwell, whose potent voice had staid the fury of the Great Massacre, was in his grave. A Papist in disguise filled the throne of Britain. It was going ill at this hour with Protestantism everywhere. The Covenanters of Scotland were hiding on the moors or dying in

the Grassmarket. France, Piedmont, and Italy were closing in around the Valleys. Still the Waldenses did not despair. They remembered the exploits of their fathers, and the wonders God had done in the mountain passes of Rora, the defiles of Angrogna, and the field of the Pra del Tor; and they resolved, after their fathers' example, and in reliance on the same Almighty arm, to defend their hearths and altars. The old defences were repaired and bravely manned, and the campaign opened with the same marvellous success as of old. In the first conflict, which took place on the slopes of Bricherasio, 500 of the French covered the field; while only two were killed and a few wounded on the side of the Waldenses. The second engagement in the Valley of San Martino ended in a similar result; and had the contest been continued in the same resolute spirit, the invading host would, without peradventure, have shared the fate of so many of their predecessors, who had left their bones on the mountains they had come to subdue. But of a sudden the resolution of the Vaudois failed, and they laid down their arms.

This sudden change of plan may be accounted for in part from the want of leaders; in part from

the false reports circulated by their enemies that their brethren in other Valleys had surrendered; and partly by the promises and sacred protestations made to them—promises and protestations all the more liberal that they were never meant to be fulfilled—that, on their submission, their rights and privileges would all be preserved intact; but undoubtedly the main cause of this sudden submission is to be sought for in the want of that firm faith in God, and lofty devotion to His cause, which had characterised their fathers. But alas! the mistake was a fatal one; and they had afterwards to expiate it by the endurance of woes a hundred times more dreadful than any they could, by any possibility, have encountered in the rudest campaign. A new massacre, attended by all the horrors of the former, overspread the Valleys, in which upwards of 3000 perished. The remainder of the nation—amounting, according to Arnaud, to between 12,000 and 15,000 persons—were consigned to the various jails and fortresses of Piedmont.

We now behold the Valleys empty! The ancient Lamp burns no longer. The school of the Barbes is razed in the Pra del Tor! No smoke is seen to issue from cottage; no psalm is heard in

dwelling or sanctuary. No herdsman leads forth his kine on the mountains ; no troop of worshippers, obedient to the Sabbath bell, climbs the mountain paths. The vine flings wide her arms, but the skill that trained her luxuriance is absent. The chestnut rains her fruits, but only to lie rotting on the ground. The terrace, overflowing with various fruitage erewhile, now shoots in a mass of ruinous rubbish down the hill-side. Nothing is seen but dismantled forts and the blackened ruins of churches and dwellings. A dreary silence overspreads the land, and the beasts of the field strangely multiply. With the exception of some few herdsmen, who were hidden in dens and caves of the mountains, the land was empty : and Monte Viso looked down astonished at the absence of that ancient race, over whom, from immemorial time, he had been wont to dart his kindling glories at dawn, and let fall the purple folds of his ample shadow at eve.

But let us follow the Waldenses to prison. We know not if ever before a whole nation was in prison together. Yet now it was so. All that remained of the Waldensian race were immured in the dungeons of Piedmont ; the pastor and his flock, the

father and his family, passed in in one great procession, and exchanged their grand rock-walled Valleys, with their flower-enamelled meadows and their sun-lit peaks, for the filth, the choking air, and the black Tartarean walls of an Italian jail. And how were they treated in prison? As the African slave was treated on the middle passage. They had a sufficiency of neither food nor clothing. The bread dealt out to them was fetid. They had putrid water to drink. They were exposed to the sun by day, and to the cold at night. They were compelled to sleep on the bare pavement, or on straw so full of vermin that the stone floor was preferable. Disease set in, and the sick and the healthy being shut up together, the mortality was fearful. "When they entered these dungeons," says Henri Arnaud, "they counted 14,000 healthy mountaineers; but when, at the intercession of the Swiss deputies, their prisons were opened, 3000 skeletons only crawled out." These few and simple words have a terrible dramatic power—they embody a tragedy so awful that the imagination recoils horror-struck from the contemplation of it.

Well, the prison doors are opened, and the captives—a woe-worn remnant of a gallant people,

the flower of the Piedmontese dominions—are sent forth : but to what ? To repeople their Valleys ? To rekindle the fire on their ancestral hearths, and cultivate their native fields ? To rebuild the “holy and beautiful house” in which their fathers had praised God ? Ah, no ! They are thrust out of prison to be sent into exile—to Vaudois a living death. The persecutor had loosed their chains, but with the cruel resolve that Vaudois soil should never again be trodden by Vaudois foot.

The former barbarity was repeated. It was the depth of winter (December 1686) when the decree of liberation was published, at which season the ice and snow are piled to a fearful depth on the Alps, and almost daily tempests threaten death to the traveller who would cross their summits. It was at this season that these poor captives, emaciated by sickness, weakened through hunger, and shivering from insufficient clothing, were commanded to cross the Alps. They began their march at five in the afternoon of that very day on which the order for their liberation arrived—for so their enemies commanded—and not fewer than a hundred and fifty died on their first journey. A

night they halted at the foot of Mont Cenis. Next morning they pointed to a snow-storm that was gathering, black and ominous, on the summit of the mountain, and prayed that, for the sake of their sick and aged, they might be allowed a little respite. The officer in charge, with heart harder than the rocks, ordered them to proceed. That troop of emaciated beings began the ascent, and soon they were struggling with the blinding drifts and fearful whirlwinds of the mountain. Eighty-six of their number dropped by the way. Where they dropped they died, and where they died they were buried. None were permitted to remain behind to succour them. That ever-thinning procession moved on over the white hills, leaving it to the snow to give burial to their stricken companions. When spring opened the passes of the Alps, alas, what ghastly memorials met the eye of the traveller! Strewed along the road were the now unshrouded corpses of these poor exiles, the dead child lying fast locked in the arms of the dead mother. Oh, unpitying Rome! the wolf that suckled thee is a verity and no fable.

But why should we prolong this harrowing tale? The first company of these miserable exiles arrived



at Geneva on Christmas-day, 1686. All winter, small parties continued to cross the Alps, being let out of prison at different times; and it was not till the end of February 1687 that the last company reached the hospitable gates of Geneva. But in what a woful plight!—way-worn, emaciated with sickness, and faint from want of food. Of some, the tongue was swollen in their mouth, and refused its office; of others, the arms were withered with the cold, and they could not stretch them out to accept the charity offered them; and some there were who dropped down and expired in the very gateway of the city, “finding,” as one has said, “the end of their life at the beginning of their liberty.” Generous, indeed, was the reception given them by the city of Calvin. A deputation of their principal citizens, headed by the patriarch Janavel, who still lived, went out to meet them on the frontier of their State; and, taking them to their homes, they vied with one another which should shew them the greater kindness. Generous city! If he who shall give a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward, the kindness shewn by thee to these perishing outcasts shall not be forgotten. In that

awful approaching night, when the angel shall pass through the land of Papal Europe, as through Egypt of old, and shall smite all its first-born and execute judgment upon all its gods, may he remember thee in thy kindness to the Vaudois, and pass over thee, and not come in unto thee to smite thee!

## CHAPTER XIX.

*San Martino—The Return.*

Exiles Resolve to Return—Moral Grandeur of the Resolution—Begin their March—Traverse the Valley of the Arve—Cross Mont Cenis—Great Victory in the Valley of the Dora—First View of their Mountains—Worship on the Mountain's Top—Enter their Valleys—First Sabbath at Prali—Cross the Col Julien—Oath of Sibaud—Driven Back to the Balsile—Surrounded by the Enemy—Miraculously Fed during Winter—Return, in Spring, of French and Piedmontese Armies—Assault and Repulse of the Enemy—Final Assault by Cannon—Miraculous Deliverance of the Four Hundred—Overtures of Peace sent them—Final Re-establishment—Narrative of Visit resumed—Ancient Mill—The Syndic's House—Great Passet—Marks of Cannon-wheels—Another Mill—Marks of Conflict around the Balsile—Fertility of Valley—Old MSS.—Cannon-balls often found at the Balsile.

WE now open the bright page of this history. It was now nearly three years since the arrival of these exiles in Switzerland. The Swiss strove to make their sojourn as little unpleasant as that of exiles could be; but, like the captives in Babylon, they wept when they remembered the Zion of their

fathers ; and, when they knelt to pray, it was ever with their faces turned towards their ancient hills. The colonies located in Germany (for Switzerland was too narrow to receive them all) were less favourably situated. They were the objects of constant surveillance on the part of their enemies, and were compelled to change their dwelling continually. This, together with that irrepressible yearning of heart for their own land, which was growing upon them every day, made them at last determine on a return thither. The march back to their own Valleys is one of the most wonderful exploits ever performed by any people. It is famous in history by the name of "*La Glorieuse Rentrée.*" The parallel event which will recur to the mind of the scholar is, of course, the retreat of the "ten thousand." An intelligent comparison of the circumstances of both will leave the candid judge in no doubt as to which the palm of valour and patriotism ought to be assigned—unquestionably and immeasurably to the "eight hundred." What grandeur in the conception ! what heroism in the execution of their design !

After repeated failures, they succeeded, at last, in eluding the vigilance of their enemies, and begin-

ning their march. On Friday, the 16th of August 1689, they assembled in a wood near Nyon, on the northern shore of the Lake of Geneva; and having, by solemn prayer, commended the enterprise to God, they crossed by star-light. They mustered eight hundred fighting men. Their leader was Henri Arnaud, whom God had specially qualified for this task, by placing him first in a pastoral charge in the Valleys, and then compelling him, by the troubles of his country, to enter the service of the Prince of Orange, afterwards William III. of England. They began their march through a country covered with myriads of foes. The terror of God had fallen upon the inhabitants of the land; still, they had occasional skirmishes to sustain with the armed villagers and peasantry. They traversed the Valley of the Arve to Salanches, a route well known to the modern tourist from Geneva to Mont Blanc. They emerged from its dangerous passes just as their enemies had completed their preparations for opposing them. They next climbed the Haut Luce Alp and that of Bon Homme, sinking sometimes to their middle in snow. On Wednesday, the fifth day of their march, they descended into the Valley of the Isere. They had looked forward

to this part of their journey with considerable misgivings, for here the inhabitants were numerous, well armed, and very hostile; but the enemy was "still as a stone" till the people had passed over. They next traversed Mont Iseran, and the yet more formidable Mont Cenis, and then descended into the Valley of the Dora. It was here, on Saturday, the 24th of August, that they encountered, for the first time, a formidable body of regular troops.\*

As they traversed the valley they met a peasant, of whom they inquired if they could here have provisions by paying for them. "Come on this way," said the man, "they are preparing an excellent supper for you." They were led into the defile of Salabertrand, where the Col d'Albin closes in upon the Dora; and, before they were aware, they found themselves in presence of the French army, whose camp-fires illumined, far and wide, the opposite slope. Retreat was impossible. The French were 2500 strong, flanked by the garrison of Exiles, and supported by a miscellaneous

\* HISTOIRE DE LA RENTRÉE DES VAUDOIS DANS LEURS VALLÉES DU PRÉMONT. Par H. ARNAUD, Pasteur et Colonel des Vaudois. Neuchâtel, 1845.

crowd of armed followers. Henri Arnaud, making his soldiers kneel down, offered up a prayer of more than usual solemnity; and then, rushing across the bridge with the impetuosity of a whirlwind, the Vaudois threw themselves upon the French soldiers, who, confounded by the suddenness of the attack, could only use their muskets to parry their blows. The fighting lasted two hours, and ended in the total route of the French. Their leader, the Marquis de Larrey, after a fruitless attempt to rally his soldiers, fled to Briançon, exclaiming, "Is it possible that I have lost the battle and my own honour?" Soon thereafter, the moon rose, and shewed the field of battle covered with the dead, and with what the Vaudois much needed—ammunition and provisions. This great victory cost the Waldenses only fifteen killed and twelve wounded.

The next morning was Sabbath, and, from the summit where they had halted for the night, their heroic leader shewed his followers the mountain tops of their own land. What a welcome sight to their longing eyes! Bathed in the light of the rising sun, the mountains seemed as if they kindled with their wonted joy at beholding their sons, long

absent, now returning. The mountain-top became that day a temple. There they worshipped, with the battle-field below, and the solemn and sacred peaks of the Col du Pis, the Col la Vechera, and the glorious pyramid of Monte Viso looking down upon them in reverent silence; and seldom have thanksgivings more fervent, and prayers more devout, been offered, than those which ascended that day into the vault that rose, dome-like, over this congregation of warrior-worshippers on the mountain's summit.

Next day, refreshed by the devotions of the Sabbath, and exhilarated by the victory of the day before, they rushed down to take possession of their inheritance. It was three years since—a crowd of exiles, worn to skeletons by sickness and confinement—they had crossed the Alps; now they returned a marshalled host, victorious over the armies of France, and equally ready to encounter those of Piedmont. On the twelfth day of their march they crossed the frontier of their Valleys. Their first Sabbath was passed at Prali, and there seemed in this something like an ordering of Providence. Prali had been the scene of a horrible tragedy at the period of the banishment. The pastor, M.



Leidet, was seized as he was praying beneath a rock ; cruelly tortured and mutilated ; and, at last, ignominiously hanged, his last words being, " Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." It was in the pulpit of the martyr Leidet that the opening of that glorious gospel took place, which the violence of the persecutor had silenced for three years and a half.

From Prali the " eight hundred " crossed the Col Julien, putting to flight the guards of Savoy that occupied the pass, and descending on their ancient little town of Bobbio. Here Henri Arnaud, entering the pulpit with a sword in one hand and a bible in the other—emblem of the twofold office of leader and pastor—preached on Sabbath the 1st of September. An incident recorded of his congregation exhibits their devotion as worshippers, blended with their ardour as patriots: they chanted the 74th Psalm to the clash of arms. Thereafter they entered into the " Oath of Sibaud," swearing, with uplifted hands, to abide in the profession of the gospel,—to stand true to one another,—and to lay down their arms only when they should have re-established themselves and their brethren in their Valleys.

They next marched to Villaro, but here their triumphant progress received a check. They took

Villaro, but, the Piedmontese army coming up, they were under the necessity of abandoning it the next day. The Waldensian heroes were now parted into two bands, and for many weeks had to wage a sort of guerilla war on the mountains. France on the one side, and Piedmont on the other, poured in soldiers, in the hope of exterminating this handful of patriots. The privations they endured were as great as the victories, achieved in their daily skirmishes, were marvellous. But their ranks were fast thinning. What though a hundred of their enemies fell for one Waldensian? the one could be recruited, the other could not. The Vaudois had now neither ammunition nor provisions but what they took from the enemy; and, to add to their perplexities, winter was near, which would bury their mountains beneath its snows, and leave them without either food or shelter. A council of war was held, and it was ultimately agreed to repair to the Valley of Martino, and entrench themselves on the Balsile.

This brings us to their last heroic stand. Let the reader imagine four mighty cone-shaped castles, rising one behind another till the last touches the clouds;—such is the Balsile. It was on the lower

terrace or top of the first pyramid that the "eight hundred"—now, alas! reduced to *four hundred*—sat down. They enclosed themselves within earthen walls, they dug holes in the rock for provisions, and erected huts as temporary barracks. Three springs that gushed from the mountain supplied them with water. Their leader assembled them for prayer and singing every morning and night. He preached twice every Sabbath, and once during the week. A few days only elapsed till the French army arrived in the valley, and enclosed the Balsile. But the brave little garrison were not to be dislodged. All attempts to that effect, on the part of the French, were repulsed with loss; and their commander, finding the winter setting in, took his departure, bidding the besieged "have patience until Easter, when he would again pay them a visit."

All through that winter, 1689-90, the four hundred remained within their mountain entrenchment. But how or whence was that garrison provisioned? Here the finger of God was as visible as in any of the great miracles recorded in Old Testament scripture. The Vaudois had laid up a small store of corn and fruits before being enclosed by the French,

but their enemies had rifled their treasures, and left them as provisionless as the fowls of the air, "which sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns." But He that feedeth the fowls of heaven cared for the Vaudois. Ample magazines of corn had their fathers' God laid up, unknown to them, around their encampment. The previous winter had set in earlier than usual, and the crops on the surrounding fields, fully ripened but uncut, were covered up by its snows; and lay here ready for the Vaudois. Little did the Popish peasantry, who sowed the seed, dream that Vaudois hands would reap the harvest. Of this arrangement the Waldenses knew nothing when they selected the Balsile: they were guided solely by the considerations of its strength; and their surprise and gratitude were only, therefore, the greater, when they saw that God, in manner as wonderful as if He had rained corn from heaven, had laid up provision for them. Without this, the Balsile would have been their grave,—not their fortress.

With the return of spring re-appeared the armies of France and Piedmont. A beleaguering host of twenty-two thousand men surrounded the Balsile. The "four hundred" looked down from their

“camp of rock” undismayed on the valley, which glittered with steel by day, and at night shone far and wide with the camp-fires of their enemies. The presiding general, the celebrated Catinat, never doubted that a few hours would suffice to storm and capture the place; and, that nothing might be wanting to give due *éclat* to the victory, which he regarded as already gained, he ordered four hundred ropes to be sent from Pignerollo to hang the Waldenses, and *feux de joies* to be prepared to celebrate the conclusion of the campaign. The assault was arranged. Five hundred picked men advanced against the Balsile, supported by seven thousand musqueteers. They attempted to scale the mountain on the side deemed weakest, where a stream trickles down, but which the garrison had taken care to fortify with palisades. It was in vain. The besieged sallied forth, and three hundred and fifty of the assailants lay dead in the gorge. The rest fell back on the main army, who had been spectators from the valley of their total route. Incredible as it may appear, it is nevertheless a fact, that not one of the brave defenders of the Balsile had fallen—not a bullet had been permitted to touch them. When the

carts sent from Pignerollo in the morning returned in the evening, they were found to contain, not the corpses of the Waldenses, as the citizens had confidently reckoned they would, but their own dead and wounded. The fireworks were not that night used.

Catinat, afraid of being a second time defeated and disgraced by this handful of mountaineers, judged fit to devolve the further progress of the siege upon the Marquis de Feuguières; and, on the 14th of May 1690, the last and grand assault was made on the Balsile. Despairing of reducing the fortress by other means, the besiegers brought up cannon, which they planted on a rocky knoll which rises on the other side of the gorge right opposite the Balsile. Never before had the rocks of San Martino been shaken by the sound of artillery. The Vaudois were preparing to celebrate the Supper together when the first boom from the enemy's battery broke upon their ear, and told them, as it echoed and re-echoed from rock to rock, and rolled upwards to the summits of the Col de Guignevert and the Col du Pis, that the cannonade had commenced. All day that thunder continued to shake their mountains, and

at eve it was found that their ramparts were in ruins, and that further resistance was hopeless. What was to be done? Night had compelled the assailants to retire, but assuredly to-morrow's dawn would see the attack renewed.

It was the hour of the Vaudois' extremity. Never before had utter destruction appeared to impend so inevitably over them. To remain where they were was death; yet whither could they flee? Behind them rose the unscaleable precipices of Mont Guignevert; beneath them lay the valley, swarming with foes. Even though pathway there were, how could they elude the vigilance of their enemies? The camp-fires made it bright as day. The hour of their extremity was the time of God's opportunity. Often it had been so before, but perhaps never so strikingly as now. The mist—the mantle so often cast over their fathers in the hour of peril—was seen to gather on the mountain above them. Intently did the eyes of the Vaudois watch it. Already it touched the higher summits of the Balsile. Downward it rolled in a white fleecy billow, over rock and pine-tree; and now it hung in sheltering folds around the war-battered fort and its handful of brave de-

fenders. Still the watch-fires gleamed bright in the valley. A few minutes more, and these too ceased to be seen. An ocean of vapour filled the gorge of San Martino, and wrapt in Tartarean gloom the beleaguering host. The moment of escape was come.

As the garrison stood mute, pondering whereunto these things might grow, Captain Poulet, a native of the Balsile, broke silence. He offered to act as their guide, and, by a path known only to himself, to lead them past the French and Piedmontese lines. Crawling on their hands and knees, and passing close to the French sentinels, yet completely hidden by the mist, they traversed the edge of precipices never before trodden by the foot of man. "He who has not seen such paths," says Arnaud, in his *Rentrée Glorieuse*, "cannot conceive the danger of them, and will be inclined to consider my account of the march a mere fiction. But it is strictly true; and, I must add, the place is so frightful that even some of the Vaudois themselves were terror-struck when they saw by daylight the nature of the spot which they had passed in the dark." When the day broke, the French and Piedmontese armies saw with amazement the



Balsile abandoned, and its garrison, now far beyond their reach, climbing the sides of Mont Guignever. Well might they sing, as they went on,

“ Our soul's escaped, as a bird  
Out of the fowler's snare ;  
The snare asunder broken is,  
And we escaped are.”

After several days' wanderings, in which they had to endure great privations and encounter many perils, they succeeded in reaching the Pra del Tor, in the Valley of Angrogna. What was their amazement, on arriving at this hallowed spot, to find deputies waiting them from the Duke of Savoy with an overture of peace! The Vaudois were as men that dreamed. An overture of peace! How was this? A coalition had been formed against Louis XIV., including Germany, Britain, Holland, and Spain; and three days had been given Victor Amadeus to say which side he would adhere to. He resolved on breaking with Louis and joining the coalition, and so needed the assistance of the Vaudois. Hence the overture that met them in the Pra del Tor. The Vaudois, ever ready to rally round the throne of their prince the moment the hand of persecution was withdrawn, closed with the terms. Their towns and valleys were

given up to them ; their brethren who still lingered in prison were liberated ; the colonies of their countrymen in Germany returned ; and thus, after a dreary interval of three and a half years, the Valleys were again peopled with their ancient race, and resounded once more with their ancient songs. So closed that famous period of their history, which, in respect of the wonders and miracles that attended it, we can compare only to the march of the people through the wilderness to the Land of Promise.

Let us now resume the narrative of our exploration. I have attempted an inadequate picture of the gorgeous magnificence of the place : the mighty slopes of vines and chestnut groves on the right ; the towering line of black splintered cliffs on the left ; the Germanasca in the middle, rolling along its tide of foam through fields of richest green ; dark mountains rising sublimely at the head of the valley, with the parted sunbeams falling in rivers of gold upon their sides. These physical grandeurs were not a little enhanced by the moral magnificence that in my eye hung around the place. We were winding our way up the valley at the foot of the mountains on the right, casting occasional glances at the summits, as the cloud,

momentarily rising, allowed glimpses of their glory to escape, and now falling again veiled them in blackness, when we came suddenly upon a little mill, almost buried in the foliage that clothed the bottom of the valley. Its roof of brown slate was just visible below us. The wheel stood motionless, and the little torrent, drawn from the Germanasca, was shooting idly past in a volley of spray. "That," said M. Turin, drawing my attention to it, "is the mill at which our fathers ground their corn when they were besieged in their castle. Along the top of that dizzy wall," said he, pointing to the black cliffs, so splintered and so cleft with fathomless crevasses, which rose on the left with a misty light along their edge, "they came every night to grind their corn for the next day's meal." "But where found they the corn?" I asked. In reply, M. Turin detailed the remarkable circumstances which I have already mentioned, which placed well-stored garnerers within their reach; and which, supplemented by the wine and fruit brought in by their foraging parties, kept them so amply supplied all winter.

A little in advance, at a goodly height on the slope, rose a large white house, of a much superior order to the other buildings in the valley, having a

fine clustering vine hanging on its balcony, and goodly fruit-trees standing round it. "The Syndic of the Commune lives here," said M. Turin. "We shall call on him, and take him with us. No one knows the localities better." The Syndic, M. Tron, on our approach, shewed himself on the balcony; and ascertaining on what errand we were bound, instantly descended, and offered to be himself our cicerone. He turned out a most valuable addition to our little party. His ancestors had taken part in the struggle; they had suffered in the exile; they had returned with Henri Arnaud; and ever since, they and he had lived in this valley, and so had been handed down, from father to son, the precise localities where the most memorable feats of the war had taken place.

I may mention that the ancestors of M. Turin had also figured in the "Glorious Return." Their patrimonial possessions lay at Bobbio. Of course they found them in the occupation of the Papists on their return; and M. Turin gave me some characteristic anecdotes of the summary ejection served by his fathers on those whom they caught in the act of vicious intromission with their goods and chattels. "It was wonderful," said the Syndic, M. Tron, as

we wound our way up the valley, "it was wonderful that two mighty kings should come into this little valley to wage a great war. It was wonderful that they should bring two great armies to subdue 400 men: but the greatest wonder of all was that their army of 22,000 should have failed to subdue the 400. How easy a matter, they thought, it would be to root out that heresy, now but a feeble spark; but their efforts to tread out that spark served only to spread the fire."

We ascended to Little Passet, which figures in the history of the siege. Passing on a mile beyond, we came to Great Passet, which figures still more in connexion with the siege, inasmuch as it was the head-quarters of the French army. Passet counts some thirty roofs or so: it is situated upon an immense ledge of rock that juts out on the mountain, some eight hundred feet above the stream below. As we were rounding the shoulder of the promontory on which it is seated, the Syndic called our attention to certain marks in the rock beside the pathway. The prints of wheels could be distinctly traced for several yards. "These are the marks of the cannon," said M. Tron, "which the French were compelled to bring up to dislodge our fathers."

“No other carriage was ever in these mountains,” he continued, “and you see how deeply worn are the grooves.” No doubt could exist in the mind of any one who saw these marks that they had been produced by wheel-carriages; but I am inclined to suppose, not solely by the cannon, but by the general baggage-vans of the army as well. The wheels that have left these prints must have passed and repassed many times, so deeply have they cut into the rock. But, beyond all doubt, these are the traces of that famous struggle; for, as M. Tron observed, on no other occasion have wheeled carriages ever been seen in the Val di Balsiglia.

We now descended into the valley, in order to cross over to the Balsile. At the point of passage of the Germanasca we found another small mill. At the time of the “Exile,” a peasant threw one of its millstones into the river, “for,” said he, “it may yet be needed.” It *was* needed after the “Return,” and a search having been made in the stream, the millstone was found, and here the Vaudois ground their corn, using the more distant mill, at the entrance of the valley, only when the presence of the French rendered access to the nearer

one impossible. M. Tron pointed out the spot near the mill where the French marshal was often seen to take his stand and gaze up at the Balsile, reconnoitring doubtless.

We now crossed the stream, and stood at the foot of the Balsile. It shot its gigantic pyramidal summits heavenward, with an air that seemed to intimate a consciousness of superior dignity, as having once been the resting-place of the Vaudois ark. It was on the summit of the first pyramid, as I have already mentioned, that Henri Arnaud pitched his camp, and, let me add, raised his altar. There pealed forth the shout of battle, and there, just as oft, rose the solemn voice of prayer. Its sides are steep and smooth as those of escarped fortresses. Viewed from the level of the valley, it seems to terminate in a point, but on ascending, it expands into a level grassy plateau. Behind and above it rises a second peak; behind the second a third; and behind the third a fourth. Stable they stood, and glorious, with the clouds rolling around the supreme peak, and slanting shafts of light enkindling their mighty forms, burnishing their naked rocks with gold, and tinting with living fire the straggling pines which, anchored in the rifted

stone, hung out their boughs at a great height on the mountain.

I remarked that the bed of the Germanasca was here particularly rough, and that the whole space betwixt its banks and the spring of the Balsile was thickly sown with stones and boulders, contrasting with the rest of the valley, where a fine sward extends up to the mountain's foot. "These," said M. Tron, "are the rocks which our fathers hurled down upon their enemies, when they attempted to scale the mountain." Then passing along before the Balsile, we turned into a cleft which divides it from the adjoining mountain. "This," said he, "is the spot where the assault was made that turned out so disastrously for the besiegers. On that knoll," said he, pointing to a shoulder of the mountain that shot out at nearly the same level as the Balsile, and seemed to frown at it across the ravine, "on that knoll were the cannon planted; and when their earthen ramparts lay in ruins around them, it was along by these precipices that they made their escape."

We now descended, and returned along the valley on the other side of the Germanasca to the house of M. Tron. On the way, he mentioned, as



a proof of the great fertility of the valley, that, whereas on the plain of Piedmont a measure of wheat yields a return of five measures, in the Valley of the Balsile one measure yields ten measures in return. I suspect the difference lies not so much in the fruit-bearing powers of the two soils as in the superior industry and culture of the Vaudois. M. Tron hospitably invited us to refresh ourselves with some of the fruit of the vine of the Val di Balsiglia. While so occupied, he mentioned that a neighbour of his had MS. notes of *La Rentrée Glorieuse*, taken on the journey. M. Turin promised to examine it, and obligingly to forward it to me in Scotland, should he be of opinion that its information was important, or such as had not been published hitherto. It never came: from which I infer that it was either a portion of the journal of Henri Arnaud, or, more probably, a copy taken from it.

Other relics of a more palpable kind yet linger in the valley. On the following evening, as I sat conversing with M. Lantaret, in his manse at Pomaret, regarding the "Return," he suddenly rose, and, running into an adjoining apartment, returned in a few minutes with a cannon ball in

his hand. "Here," said he, "is one of the balls that were fired at our fathers. It was found at the Balsile ten years ago. It is a twelve-pounder. In former years such things were very common, but of late they have been found somewhat less plenteously."

My visit to the Balsile was now ended, and I started for Pomaret, my last stage for the day. M. Tron and M. Turin kindly accompanied me back to the mouth of the Val Balsiglia. Here the cliffy front of a tall Alp stood parting the path. On the left, some thousand feet below me, was a gorge formed by two overhanging mountains. The footpath wound down the slope, and, running on into the opening of the gorge, which looked no bigger than a pigeon-hole, became lost in darkness. "Your road," said M. Turin, "lies through that chasm; you cannot miss your way, unless you take wings and rise above these mountains. A smart walk of three hours will bring you to Pomaret." So saying, he bade me adieu.

## CHAPTER XX.

**Pomaret.**

**Grand Ravine—Compared with the Syk in Idumea—Rich Cultivation of the Pass—Rejoin San Martino—Le Perier—Town of Pomaret—Sabbath Morning—Public Worship—A Baptism—Interior of Churches—Dress of the People—The Vaudois Face—Moulded under Persecution—Sabbath Revels in the Popish Town of Perosa—Sabbath Eve in Pomaret.**

I DESCENDED the path, casting now and then suspicious glances at the gorge towards which my steps led. It looked black as cavern or prison-door, and promised to conduct me, far from the dwellings of men and the face of day, down into the very bowels of the earth. But the dancing torrent was entering it joyously, and why should not I? I went in along with the rolling Germanasca, whose white waves, as they flung themselves fearlessly forward, filled the pass with melodious echoes. In a moment all my fears were dissipated. The darkness and terror were only without, within

I met nought but beauty and sublimity. I found, in short, that I was traversing the grandest pass I had ever seen. I had often in imagination threaded the famous Syk, which leads into the ruined city of Petra, in the land of Edom; but this excelled it in every respect. It was nearly twice as long as that celebrated chasm; it was quite as narrow in many places; it was edged by cliffs five times taller; and instead of the naked precipices and the black gloom, which are all that one encounters in the Idumean Syk, I found here the brightest verdure, the goodliest trees, noble vines enwreathing the rock, or mantling white châlet that gleamed out from its nest amid the cliffs, and long golden beams which the sun shot slantwise down through the rents in the towering line of cliff and peak that ran along far above me in the sky.

Though the ravine is narrow as tunnel almost, the skilful and industrious hand of Vaudois has covered it with the richest cultivation. That people have created a sumptuous garden, filled with all manner of delights, where in another occupancy there would have been only a naked and barren defile. There the apple and cherry tree rain their stores; there grows the vine on the terraces

that cover the slopes; and there, too, they sow wheat, maize, and other plants. The meadows in the bottom are surpassingly soft and beautiful; they are delicate, as if "shaven with scythe and smoothed with roller." The Vaudois village of Maneille, with its temple, is exceedingly picturesque, standing, as it does, at a great height on the mountain above the traveller, amid the green beauty of mead and the foliage of fruit-trees. The path runs on, now twining round rock, now hugging bosky dell; now descending to the torrent's brink, now climbing the mountain on broken steps and rocky ledges; now leading to this side of the ravine, and now to that, rewarding you for these capricious turnings by the glorious vistas it opens ever and anon of snowy alp or lofty peak seen afar through the long narrow opening of the pass, like alabaster dome or cathedral tower revealed in the perspective of some street of city. It looked as if Sir Walter Scott's fine description had been written for it:—

"The rocky summits, split and rent,  
Form'd turret, dome, or battlement,  
Or seem'd fantastically set  
With cupola or minaret,  
Wild crests as pagod ever deck'd,  
Or mosque of eastern architect."

Some of these views reminded me of the glimpse we have of St Paul's in London, where the dome is seen rising sublime in air, terminating the ascending vista of Ludgate-hill; only here every object was on a scale immensely more colossal.

An hour's walk brought me to where the chasm opens into the Val San Martino, and the pass I had entered doubtfully I left with regret. I proceeded along the more open valley, which was rich in woods, and was ennobled by the Germanasca, which rolled along in a broad and full river. Soon I came to Le Perier, and I needed no one to tell me that this was a Roman Catholic village: the dirt of the place, the languor on the faces of its people, and the feeling of discomfort which, like an infection, seizes upon even the passing stranger, left that noways doubtful. I went on marking the varying beauties as eve tinted and softened the rocks and woods of the valley, and in about three hours from my parting with M. Turin, just as dusk was beginning to render objects indistinct, I sighted Pomaret dimly rising from amidst its clustering woods of chestnut and apple trees. M. Lantaret, the pastor of Pomaret, had returned from Britain only a few days before, and was kind enough to say

that my visit was the more welcome, inasmuch as it enabled him to feel that he was still prolonging his intercourse with Scotland. Thus my wanderings for the week ended in the house of this kind and Christian family—the abode of intelligence and elegance.

How tranquilly the Sabbath opened in this lonely valley—still and peaceful as Scottish Sabbath in Scottish hamlet! It recalled to mind the fine opening of Grahame's poem:—

“ How still the morning of the hallow'd day !  
 Mute is the voice of rural labour, hush'd  
 The ploughboy's whistle and the milkmaid's song.  
 The scythe lies glitt'ring in the dewy wreath .  
 Of tedded grass, mingled with faded flowers,  
 That yester-morn bloomed waving in the breeze.  
 Sounds the most faint attract the ear—the hum  
 Of early bee, the trickling of the dew,  
 The distant bleating, midway up the hill.  
 Calmness seems throned on yon unmoving cloud.  
 To him who wanders o'er the upland leas,  
 The blackbird's note comes mellower from the dale ;  
 And sweeter from the sky the gladsome lark  
 Warbles his heav'n-tuned song ; the lulling brook  
 Murmurs more gently down the deep-sunk glen.  
 \* \* \* \* \*

With dove-like wings Peace o'er yon village broods.”

What a contrast to that tumult of noise and gaiety in which I had seen the day open in the village of Aix les Bains in the Savoy Alps, and that greater tumult in which I had seen it begin in the great

sea-port of Genoa! Sir Walter Scott makes a Highlander remark that "Sabbath seldom comes aboon the Pass of Killiecrankie." I was reminded of the remark by what came under my observation in the Valley of Pomaret. It seemed to me that Sabbath did not cross the Clusone. On the other side of that river, and scarce two miles from the village of Pomaret, was the Roman Catholic town of Perosa, and the most unmistakeable signs told us that there the Sabbath was being kept after a very different fashion. All day long the sounds of piping, dancing, and making merry came borne on the breeze towards us from that town. A great festival was being held in honour of some Romish saint, and at times a perfect thunder-burst of noise would strike upon the ear, made up of the ringing of bells, the beating of drums, the blowing of clarionets and trumpets, and the shouting of men. This only gave me a keener relish for the deep quiet of Pomaret. How still and sweetly that town looked out upon the vale in front, so richly covered with the foliage of the apple, the vine, and innumerable other fruit-bearing trees, and how securely it nestled at the foot of the great alp that rose behind it, up whose terraced slope the morning psalm was stealing!



At eleven o'clock we went to the "temple." The congregation might amount to betwixt five and six hundred. Cordial, indeed, were the greetings which M. Lantaret received from his flock at the church-door on his return from Scotland; but more flattering still was the compliment paid him within doors, in the marked attention with which they listened to his discourse—a discourse rich in its statements of divine truth, and eloquent in illustration and appeal. In a Vaudois congregation there is little to remind the visitor from Scotland that he is out of his own country, save the foreign tongue, which is too purely French to be easily comprehensible by the bulk of the people, whose vernacular is a compound of Italian and French. The worship is conducted much as at home, with this difference, that a somewhat greater amount of duty is allotted to the regent. He is required to begin the service by reading what is termed the Liturgy, and which consists of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and two or three chapters of the Bible, with the observations of Ostervald thereon. After that the worship proceeds as in the Presbyterian churches of Scotland.

At the close of worship M. Lantaret dispensed

the ordinance of baptism, and I had an opportunity of seeing how that rite is administered in the Valleys. Two men and two women, being the father and mother, and the godfather and godmother, took their places in a line before the pulpit. The godfather carried the child, and the godmother bore a phial filled with water and also a towel. A brief exposition of the nature of baptism was addressed to the godfather, who stood presenting the child. Two broad pieces of crimson cloth, pinned to his shoulders, were spread out as a screen or veil over the infant. The vows were next laid upon the godfather—an old Genevan custom, as I have been given to understand. The young woman with the phial then poured part of its contents into the two palms of the minister, joined cup-like, and the child was baptized, by sprinkling of course, and had its name given it at the same time.

The interior of the churches of the Valleys is extremely simple; the whitewashed walls are without the least attempt at ornament. Commonly, however, the simple but most significant symbol of their church is to be seen, if not within, yet outside the building,—the candlestick, with the seven stars, surrounded by the motto, "*Lux lucet in tenebris.*"

How truly apocalyptic the imagery! Read here—this motto is a sermon of itself: nothing but God's sovereign grace and almighty power could have preserved alive this candlestick amidst the all-encompassing gloom. As a grain of corn in the earth, God kept the Evangel in the very heart of Antichrist's kingdom.

The dress of the people is plain to severity. The garments of the men are of coarse woollen; and those of the women of equally coarse cotton, made up in the most primitive style. Nor is there any variety of colour to atone for the homely materials which compose their attire; the colour of all is a deep blue, and the sombre aspect presented by a mass of several hundreds may easily be imagined. The monotonous and dreary expanse is unrelieved, save by the white caps of the women, and the high shirt-necks of the men. Crinolines have not yet found their way into the Valleys. In fact the commonest ornaments with us are unknown to them, and would be accounted a most extravagant finery. And the whole aspect of the people is in keeping with their dress. Their appearance bespeaks continual familiarity with privation and toil. They are of low stature, their frames are, as it were,

pressed down, their faces are furrowed, many of them wrinkled with premature age. There is, with them, an entire absence of that unthinking clownish gaiety, that childish mirthfulness, which mark the faces of the peasantry of the surrounding countries. The Vaudois face is earnest, deep, grave—grave to sadness. It betokens, nevertheless, a most extraordinary power of passive endurance. Through the air of sorrowful seclusion that hangs upon that face, there can be traced a quiet resolute courage, which could enable its owner to face death a thousand times rather than yield—a settled purpose of soul not to be shaken or overborne by any power that may be brought against it, and suggesting the very sentiment which Wordsworth has clothed in so fitting expression—

“ But who would force the soul, tilts with a straw  
Against a champion cased in adamant.”

We must bear in mind that the Vaudois face was moulded under persecution—a persecution which far exceeded in severity, as it did in duration, any persecution that ever befell any other race. The Waldenses have, from first to last, endured upwards of thirty persecutions. In these we do not include the perpetual kidnappings of their children, the

ever-recurring martyrdoms of their pastors and missionaries, the civil and political grievances under which they lay, which made their state, for five long centuries, a normal state of persecution: we have respect, in this enumeration, to outstanding periods of violence and martyrdom which were inflicted upon them. Between the years 1561 and 1686, there were no less than sixty-eight enactments against them, which is at the rate of rather more than one every two years. How impossible that such a state of things should not leave its impress upon the feelings and the faces of the people! It has unquestionably done so in the blending of opposite qualities. Timidity and endurance, a manner betraying at once submission and a lofty indomitable courage, mark the inhabitants of the Valleys. Their great woes project their dark shadows back upon them. True, they are now emancipated; but their liberty dates only from 1848, and the bulk of the existing generation grew up under a state of irritating and cramping bondage.

The sounds of merriment and uproar, which all day long had proceeded from Perosa, were waxing louder as the day advanced, and I felt a strong desire to visit it, and witness with my own eyes the

*Sabbath* of Popish Perosa in contrast with the *Sabbath* of Protestant Pomaret. At my request, M. Lantaret walked out with me, as the evening was setting in, across the Clusone, which separates the Protestant from the Popish portion of the Val Perosa. We skirted the mouth of the valley of Pragela, which runs up towards France in a noble line of meadows and corn lands, watered by the river, and grandly bounded by precipices and mountains. It has now scarce any Protestant inhabitants. We turned off to the right and descended on Perosa. The first person we met, as we were nearing the town, was a man who had been deep in the wine-flagon, yet not so deep as to drown his zeal for Mother Church, or to spoil his scent for heresy. He gave us to understand, in accents as distinct as the potations he had been indulging in permitted, that he smelt a couple of heretics, and had the visit been made a hundred and seventy years earlier, the pastor of Pomaret and myself might have had a very prominent place assigned us in the evening's amusements. But now, and for the present, Giant Pope can but grin in the Valleys. We passed on, and entered the little town. The revels were proceeding without control; the streets were filled with

noisy loiterers, and the shops with still noisier carousers. In the little square of the place, a sort of court had been railed off, and a gallery run up along one of its sides, gaily decorated with flowers and boughs, in which sat some dozen or two of musicians. They had drums, big and small, they had violins and all sorts of musical instruments; and no little noise did they make. Beneath them, in the enclosed space devoted to that purpose, the dance was proceeding. There could not be less than a hundred persons of either sex engaged in it at the time. Great flambeaux, stuck on the pillars of the balcony and along the railings of the enclosure, lighted up the scene.

I expected to have seen an air of recklessness and conscious guilt upon the faces of the dancers. There was nothing of the sort. On the contrary, I was struck with the animal decency which almost every face before me bore. They were grievously profaning that "day" which the Fourth Commandment requires us to "remember" and to keep "holy;" but these persons had never read the Fourth Commandment, and therefore were quite unconscious that they were violating it. Were one to witness a Sabbath-revel of this sort in Scotland, he would

find the persons who should take part in it wearing a physiognomy very different indeed ; and for this reason, that in Scotland none would engage in such a scene save those who had broken loose from religion. Here, on the contrary, the dancers were not only ignorant of its requirements, but they believed that religion positively sanctioned their sports. It is in such populations, unthinking and submissive, that the priests find their ready tools when they wish to organise a crusade against the young liberties of Piedmont. Were we asked what, in our opinion, would soonest and most effectually undermine and lay prostrate the liberties of Britain, we should say, Re-enact the " Book of Sports."

We remained only a few minutes, and then recrossed the Clusone. What a transition ! I felt that this Valley of Perosa contained two worlds, and that the Clusone was the boundary betwixt them. Two worlds there were, widely different in their intellectual and moral state ; and, though lying side by side, they were nevertheless as far apart as if the one had been Italy and the other Scotland. Enjoying a contemporaneous existence, they were as unlike in every respect as if five centuries had divided them.



Sweet, indeed, was the peace that brooded around Pomaret! Sweet it had been all day, but now it seemed sweeter and deeper than ever; it was felt to be holy even, after witnessing the troubled scene we had just left. It was M. Lantaret's first Sabbath after his return from Britain, and I could not but mark how the Vandois heart within him clung to his vale. He would lift proud glances to the noble hills around Pomaret, and say, "Edinburgh is the most beautiful city in the world, but who could forget this valley? Is it possible not to love such a land?" There spoke the descendant of the men who pined by the shores of Lake Lemán for their own hills, and who fought their way back to them through myriads of foes. Around these hills the shades of night had now gathered, but a clear balmy night it was, with a heaven overhead thickly planted with large lustrous stars. Myriads and myriads of cicalæ were singing in the meads and the orchards, and their sharp ringing notes, as they rose on the breezeless air, awoke the reverberations of the hills, and filled the valley with loud echoes.

Many a noble sight does the continent of Europe present. How grandly does the day open on the Alps! how gorgeously does it set in the Mediter-

ranean ! how sweet the gathering twilight on the Adriatic ! But in true sublimity and soul-stirring power, not one of them all can compare with the majestic and solemn calm of a Scottish Sabbath eve. It was of this I was now reminded. Re-entering the presbytère, the pastor of Pomaret, assembling his household, closed the day as he had opened it, with "those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide."

" Then, kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King,  
The *saint*, the *father*, and the *husband* prays :  
Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing,'  
That *thus* they all shall meet in future days :  
There ever bask in uncreated rays,  
No more to sigh or shed the bitter tear,  
Together hymning their Creator's praise,  
In such society, yet still more dear ;  
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere."

## CHAPTER XXI.

## Valley of Perosa.

A Cloudy Morning—Pass the Scene of Last Night's Revel—Part from M. Lantaret—The Valley of Perosa—Its Great Fruitfulness—Its Apple-trees and Vines—The Chestnut-tree—Village of San Germano—Guide and Mountain Pass—Rain—The Presbytere of Prarustino—Magnificent View from Balcony—Return to La Torre.

THE morning of the following day opened doubtfully. A gathering mist rested steadily on the hill-tops. A cold gray cloud enwrapt the sky, and those fair beams were wanting which had given such brilliancy to the former morning. The noble stream, the fine orchards, from which the valley has its name, the terraced vine-slopes, all were there, but there were no tintings on the foliage, no fleckings on the sward; all was toned down to what painters call a raw green. Clouds of swallows were skimming the meadows in a way that gave no very favour-

able augury of the weather. Even M. Lantaret, familiar as he must be with the signs of change among the mountains, could not say what mid-day might bring, whether torrents of rain, that would fill the mountain channels and flood the Clusone, or a sun that would scatter the mist, and bathe in splendour every rock and flower in the Valley of Perosa. My journey had to be gone, whatever might betide.

I started at eight, and as M. Lantaret had resolved to visit a distant part of his extensive parish that day, he accompanied me for two or three miles, our way lying so far in common. We crossed the Clusone, and passed through the town of Perosa. This gave us an opportunity of seeing the scene of last night's revel. The quiet of the Sabbath had come, now that the Sabbath was past; but it was the quiet of exhaustion, not the quiet of repose like that which yester-morn brooded so sweetly over Pomaret. I have sometimes heard the exclamation, "Oh, how dull is your *Scotch Sunday!*" If such would visit Perosa, and similar towns, they would find that there is something duller still, and that is an *Italian Monday*. Perosa was not yet awake; it was sleeping off its revel. We met scarce a per-

son in the streets ; these were littered with branches and other relics of the fête. We passed the enclosure, so gay last night with torches, dancers, and its wreathing of gaudy flowers. How tawdry did these things look in the light of day ! they lay strewed all about, and were already withered—too true an emblem of the pleasures sought in such amusements. We read numerous placards on the walls, announcing a similar festival for next Sabbath in the town of Pignerollo, and inviting the good people of Perosa to it. Such are the uses which Rome finds for the Day of Rest. She takes care to leave to her people no season for quiet, serious, concentrated thought.

It was a relief to leave the unnatural quiet of the little town, and to emerge on the open bosom of the Val Perosa. We recrossed the river, and descended along its right bank. Soon we came to where a path struck off on the right, and went winding up the mountain amid its hamlets and walnut groves. " We must part here," said M. Lantaret ; " my errand takes me up thither," pointing to a hamlet that looked down upon us from a great height on the hill. So, loading me with remembrances which I was to carry back to friends in Scotland, he gave

himself to the mountain path, and I went on my way along the valley. I again met that accomplished Christian pastor at La Torre, and I finally parted from him at Pignerollo a few days afterwards. He left on my mind no ordinary impression of his mental acuteness and his Christian worth. M. Lantaret is Vice-president of the Vaudois Table.

I proceeded onward. On my left was the Clusone, a broad stream of a clear blue tint, freckled with foam as it dashed against the rocks which the floods of innumerable winters have left in its bed. On the other side of the river was the fine macadamised road which, crossing the Col Sestrieres from France, descends through the valley of Pragela and runs on to Pignerollo. The grandeur of the Val Balsiglia, and the romantic beauty of the ravine I had traversed on my way from the Balsile to Pomaret, still haunted my remembrance, and the rich Valley of Perosa seemed somewhat tame in comparison. Yet it is a fine district, and in any other country would be held in high repute for its mountain grandeur, as well as for its agricultural wealth. The bottom of the valley is a plain of about two miles in width. The cultivation of its fields is various and rich; wheat, maize, the Indian pea,

potatoes, cabbages, and a variety of other productions, are seen upon it. Its meadows are fresh, and their luxuriant growth rarely permits the scythe to lie idle: its wild flowers are abundant, its woods are flourishing, and include the oak, the sycamore, the birch, with a large intermixture of fruit-trees, especially the apple, the plum, the cherry, and the walnut.

Nor do its enclosing hills less merit commendation. A row of little Alps—for such they would be styled in any other country, though here dwarfed into knolls by the mightier forms that rise behind them—run along on the left. From bottom to top these hills are covered with the vine, and seldom have I seen a finer display of vineyards than they present. On the right, hung right above me, on the mountain's side, was terrace on terrace. What a mingling of knoll and lawn, of fruitage and foliage! The vines ran along in festoons, or, bending their boughs downwards, hung their clusters, now beginning to be empurpled, over the face of the terrace. And there were bosky dells and ravines, in which hamlets nestled, half-buried amid the apple and the chestnut. In the valley by the path rose cottages whose doors were gay with the Indian-

pea, while the apple-tree was trailing her branches on their roof, laden with golden fruit. Occasionally I met young girls in charge of a little flock of two cows and a goat, who to their occupation of tending these animals added a little thrift by way of spinning. In one hand they carried a small stick, round which a quantity of flax was wound; with the other they drew out the thread, which, from time to time, was wound round the bobbin that dangled from the stick.

The higher mountains that enclosed the valley, though inferior to those of Luserna and Angrogna, are fine, though the mists permitted not a full view of them. I had glimpses at times of serrated ridges and bold scalps of rock rising high above the gentler and finely clothed hills that occupied the foreground, and towards the head of the valley, beyond the town of Perosa, the lofty and dark form of the Buchard Alp would at times look forth from a pavilion of black clouds.

But the chestnut-tree! I must here indite a special paragraph in its praise. It has been the steadfast friend of the Vaudois from time immemorial. I know not what would have become of them had it not stood by them. Without any care



or pains on their part, it has yielded its harvests from generation to generation—the sons eating from those very boughs which fed their fathers and their great-great-grandfathers. No other crop do they gather in the Valleys but with toil. Their vines must be pruned with care. Their fields must be dug with the spade; for in these mountains the plough is almost unknown. The manure has to be carried to the field on the backs of the people; the seed is conveyed in the same way; and the sheaves are brought home at last, just as the manure and seed were carried out, on the shoulders of the peasant. And thus, after many days of toil and watchfulness, do the Vaudois reap the harvests of their land. But it is not so with the chestnut-tree. Nature is its only cultivator. It needs not, in order that it may bear fruit, that plough should furrow it, or that sower should cast his seed into it. Spring comes and clothes it with blossoms; summer comes and fills its buds; autumn comes and ripens its fruits, which, falling in a bounteous rain, are gathered by the Vaudois, and ground and eaten in winter. In short, the chestnut-tree is a little field, not laid down on earth, but hung in air, with Nature for its husbandman.

In rather more than two hours from the time of leaving Pomaret, I arrived at the extremity of the Val Perosa. It looks quite a *cul de sac*; only its enclosing barrier is not one of dark precipices like that in Angrogna, but of lovely little hills, conical in shape, and feathered with birches and pines. A carpeting of delicious meadows runs quite up to their feet, with groves of apple-trees clustering so thick as to leave only glimpses of the Clusone, the silvery gleam of which is finely relieved by the golden fruitage of the apple-groves which so profusely cover its banks.

Here we reach the little village of San Germano, which is simply a clump of houses a little way up the hill-side, with the Clusone a stone's cast or so from it. A letter of introduction, given me that morning by M. Lantaret, opened to me the door of the presbytère, and secured a courteous reception from the pastor of the parish, M. Bonjour. This gentleman having very obligingly undertaken the task of providing me with a guide through the mountains to Prarustino, found, after a little search, a member of his own flock, to whose charge he committed me; and so, after resting nearly an hour in the manse, I resumed my journey.

We now turned off on the right, quitting the valley of Perosa, which, as we ascended the height, I saw was not a *cul de sac*, as the girdling of lovely pyramidal hills at its extremity would have made one believe. Among these hills rose two mighty masses of rock, betwixt which, as through a natural gate, passed on the military road of Napoleon, and the river Clusone, pursuing their course along the valley to Pignerollo, which lies some three hours to the south. We struck into the hills, and soon found ourselves threading a narrow defile, betwixt low mountains, covered with birches, broom, and other plants, which gave to it much the look of a Scottish lowland pass. My guide was a staid elderly man, a member of M. Bonjour's congregation, as I have said, and I had some conversation with him. In answer to my inquiries, he told me that he had no family; that he possessed a copy of the Word of God, and that he read a portion of it every day; and that, so far as he knew his neighbours, this was much their manner of life also. It was the testimony of all with whom I came in contact, that vital religion, as evidenced in the practice of reading the Bible, of family worship, and prayer meetings, was decidedly on the increase among the Wal-

denses, and was approximating the standard common among the best portion of the Scottish people. But it is not fair to compare the Waldenses with ourselves, whose position exempts us, to so large a degree, from the deteriorating influences which surround them. If we would measure fairly their real and absolute attainments in Christianity, both theoretical and practical, we must compare them, not with ourselves, nor with the Catholic populations around them, which they excel as light excelleth darkness, but with the other Protestant Churches on the Continent. When so tested, they will be seen to be, *par excellence*, the Christians of continental Europe.

The mist which had been gathering all day was getting lower and lower on the hill-side, and big drops now began to patter on the boughs overhead, and to speckle the path with little patches of black. Soon the drops grew into a shower, the shower into torrents. Alack! my cotton umbrella, which I had bought in London for the journey, and had not once used till now, was all too narrow in its spread to be of much service in these alpine deluges. My guide was better provided. He unfurled an extent of white cotton, edged with blue,

which covered not merely his own person, but the whole width of the road, and went marching on before me in the most unconcerned manner. But the boughs formed a natural umbrella, and taking refuge under them during the heavier plumps, I managed to get along without being very much wetted. By and by the little valley widened, and I began to have the notion that there was much quiet beauty in it could I but see it. The rain and cloud which hung between me and its slopes, so rich in mantling vines and flourishing woods, as occasional glimpses shewed them to be, acted somewhat as does a veil upon a plain face, which, by softening and blending the features, gives it an air of beauty and interest. So this veil of mist gave the charm of enhanced richness to this valley, but, indeed, so far as I could judge, it needed no such veil, but was quite able, in virtue of its own independent charms, to bear the light of day. In about an hour and a half we arrived at the manse of Prarustino.

I was unfortunate, in not finding M. Pasteur Canton at home; and, to add to my disappointment, Madame Canton was ill and laid up in bed. She took care, however, that I should want for

nothing. A fire was quickly lighted; wine and other dainties were placed upon the table; and a pressing invitation was sent me to stay all night, with the assurance that M. Canton would join me in the evening. I regretted much that my arrangements did not permit of this.

The presbytère, which has all the elegancies and comforts of an English vicarage, is seated on the summit of a lower alp, just where the mountains stoop abruptly down, and sink into the plains of Piedmont. A door was thrown open, and I was invited to walk out upon the balcony. I did so. The effect was instantaneous and overpowering, and made me fall back. It was like the rising of the veil of another world. I had entered the manse on its other side from a mist-shaded glen, but the first step on the balcony had flung open a whole kingdom, or rather, as I felt at the moment, a world to my view. Cis-*Apennine* Italy lay at my feet.

I can convey to the reader no idea of the extent and magnificence of the scene, or of the wonder with which I continued to gaze upon it. It impressed me the more, doubtless, from its offering a perfect contrast to the scenes with which I had been conversant for days past. It challenged ad-

miration by one element alone—vastness to wit, illimitable vastness. From the bottom of the mountain on which I stood, it stretched out and out till it met the far-off line where the firmament stooped down upon it. From the Western Alps it ran on and on to the farthest east. But what a multiplicity of objects dotted its mighty surface! Spires stood up, no bigger than the small pins which the gardener in spring sticks into the earth to mark where he has sown his seed. White specks were seen where cities stood; larger patches of dark green betokened the existence of chestnut and walnut woods; and bright silver threads, woven into the green web of the plain, shewed where rivers rolled along to the sea. But what struck me most was the unusual aspect of its atmospheric phenomena. The clouds which were hung in its sky were many hundred feet below me, and I looked down upon them as they moved athwart the plain, driven by the winds. A black thunder-cloud had gathered above Turin, and it came forward, like a sweeping charge of cavalry, right in the direction of Prarustino. It shot its bolts as it came onward, and I could distinctly mark the red forked line of its lightnings as they darted from the cloud to the

plain, and saw the long trail of its showers as they followed hard in the track of its march. I reckoned that soon it would be upon me; but before it had got half-way across the plain, it took off, and rolled its dark masses up the gorge of Susa, on the left, to find its final resting-place on Mont Cenis.

I lingered long on the balcony, gazing on the measureless scene outspread beneath me. I felt as if I occupied a point outside the world, where I could tranquilly stand and look down upon the cities and mountain chains of earth, and upon the clouds and storms of its sky, that were rolling and flashing far beneath. This was the closing scene of my journey. The panorama of my tour was now terminating with the mightiest and grandest scene of all.

I had yet a walk of twelve miles to La Torre. The evening set in with lashing rain and vivid gleams of lightning, but about eight o'clock I reached in safety the hotel L'Ours. There followed a few quiet days, during which I climbed to the summit of the Castelluzzo, and had another walk to Bobbio, after which I started for home.



## CHAPTER XXII.

*Conclusion.*

The *Past* the Interpreter of the *Present*—Assassination—Retribution  
—Why is Piedmont Free?—The Waldenses the Authors of its  
Liberties—Liberty Worth its Price—Spain—France—British  
Liberty—Confessors and Martyrs the Founders of Britain's Liberty.

THE history over which we have passed so rapidly affords the true key for the right understanding of the present state of Europe. The *present* of the world never can stand alone; it must ever be linked with the *past*—linked as effect is linked to its cause, and as harvest to the seed-time. It must necessarily be so, because the race is one, and because, too, the Great Ruler pursues with regard to it a scheme of providence that is one, although progressive. This remark, true of every age, is especially true of the present. There is no understanding the moral and retributive character of the present era, but by a reference to the ages that went before it—

to the principles then propagated, and the crimes then committed.

One of the prominent crimes of the *past* was ASSASSINATION. The foregoing pages exhibit the Waldenses given "as sheep to the slaughter." Well, one of the prominent punishments of the *present* is ASSASSINATION. Who can fail seeing herein the *present* rising upon the world stamped with the very image of the *past*, and by this resemblance proclaiming itself the legitimate and necessary offspring of that past? This crime of assassination, now becoming so fearfully common as a means of taking off kings and changing Governments, is no new thing, but an old. Both in theory and practice it is old, and nothing is *new* about it save the particular application now made of it. Who was the great preacher of assassination in past times? We venture to say, there are more books in the Vatican library alone, ten times over, than in all Britain, recommending and urging assassination. There is no need to write new treatises; more elaborate, ingenious, and eloquent defences of this crime cannot be produced than those with which the Jesuits have already stored all the great libraries of Europe. Britain has been called "a den of assassins!" A den of

assassins, forsooth! Pray, who was it that first made these men assassins, and then drove them across the Channel? Who was it, pray, that covered the Continent with assassins, and filled its libraries with books justifying assassination? Purge the libraries of Paris, of Rome, of Vienna, of Louvain first, and then prosecute for pamphlets in London, not half so ably written. True, Rome says, We taught only that wicked men and tyrannical kings were to be taken off in this way. The Waldenses of Piedmont, for instance! Our own Elizabeth! The good Coligni; and such as he! Well, but don't the Mazzinianists say the same thing? They strike at none but wicked men and tyrannical kings; and they ask, Why should you have canonised Clement and Ravailac, and guillotined Orsini? Why should that dagger, which was holy in your hands, be murderous in ours? You it was that taught us to employ it. Thus Rome reaps the harvest which she sowed, and now finds that same dagger, whose edge she whetted, and which in times not very long gone past she employed to shed blood in torrents in all the countries of Europe, turned against herself. Far be it from us to justify the crime of assassination, or to

give countenance to the folly that thinks by the dagger's stroke to regenerate the world, eradicate the evils and prejudices of ages, and enable nations, by a leap, to exchange their chains for liberty! But neither ought we to be unobservant of God's righteous providence, by which He makes Papal Europe *suffer* in the same form in which she *sinned*. "And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus: for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

The *past* enables us to understand why Piedmont is now a free and constitutional country. In the year 1848 all the states of Italy, or rather we should say all the kingdoms of western Europe, started on a common career of what for the moment was unbounded political freedom. Not a link of their ancient bondage was left. Every political restraint was repudiated and cast off, and constitutions were framed, embracing to a larger extent the popular and democratic element than

does the constitution of Britain. Yet the liberty achieved, and which the nations hailed with jubilant shouts, was short-lived. It turned out to be not the oak of centuries, but the prophet's gourd, which withered in a night. The present hours shews us these same nations sunk in a worse despotism than that in which the revolution of 1848 found them, and for which it gave them a few months' respite. All have fallen back save one, and that one is Piedmont. But why Piedmont? Why not France? Why not Tuscany? Why Piedmont, brim-full for ages of political and ecclesiastical serfdom and bigotry? That has been, and still is, an insoluble problem to politicians. It is soluble, nevertheless, though only on one principle. That principle is, that liberty of conscience is the root of all other liberty; and that liberty of conscience, left out of the constitutions of the other countries, was included in the constitution of Piedmont. Such, in truth, was the fact. The Waldenses had contended for that principle for ages. They had preserved and vindicated it by their sufferings and martyrdoms; and when the time came that a free constitution was to be framed for Sardinia, it was found necessary to give standing-room to the Waldenses within

the limits of that constitution. This could be done only by recognising the principle of freedom of conscience. Here, then, was the constitution of Piedmont, and the liberties of its people, based on that one grand principle which alone is liberty. While that principle remains untouched, Piedmont will continue free. On this anchor Piedmont will ride out every storm ; but uplift it, and she will begin to drift helplessly towards the same reactionary gulf into which the other states have sunk. Thus we now behold the Waldenses and the Piedmontese reaping together in those fields in which their fathers in former times sowed in blood. So must liberty be bought.

But is liberty worth that price? Inquire, we pray you, at those who have lost it. Ask manacled Italy, ask down-trodden Poland, what they think the fair worth of liberty. Ask them how much they would be willing to give for an hour's freedom—a drop of water to cool their tongue. Look at Spain, a dotard, a beggar. She dispensed with liberty, imagining that she had found a sufficient substitute in the mines of Mexico and the “barbaric pearl and gold” of India. She thought, by the mere potency of wealth, to enchain empire

eternally to her chariot-wheel. Alas, alas! how egregiously she deceived herself. There was a worm at the root of her power; or rather, her power wanted a root altogether. Wealth, empire, glory, all vanished as vanishes the goodly and gorgeous structures of cloudland when the tempest sets in. And now, sunk in servility and poverty, the poor dotard may be seen going about, talking maudlingly of empire, and holding a bauble crown and sceptre in her hand, the derision and laughing-stock of all her neighbours.

There is a true liberty, and there is a counterfeit. There is a Brummagem article, manufactured to take the market; a mere affair of tinsel and gilding, which looks like the true metal, but is not. This may be had very cheap; but what is it good for? The gilding is soon rubbed off, and the cold iron shines through. France, in these later times, has been a large dealer in this counterfeit article. She thought she had got a great bargain when, for a few barricades and a mere sprinkling of blood, she received in return what she took to be liberty. It is said of those who traffic with a certain personage, that their payments in gold are in a little time

transmuted into worthless stones. What France has so eagerly laid hold upon as liberty has been changed in her grasp into a bundle of chains,—into a knot of twisted snakes. She has tried, now the empire, and now the republic. She has been ruled, now by a dictator, and now by universal suffrage—she has had Parliaments, the ballot, “liberty, fraternity, equality”—every form and phase of freedom, in short; but freedom itself has ever escaped her! Disappointment this, bitter and galling; yet how often repeated: nor to this hour has France learned to shun the counterfeit and pursue the true. Of France we may say, as Wordsworth has said of Greece, when ridiculing the holiday efforts of the “sons of the brave who fought at Marathon,”

France,—“her head hath bow'd,  
As if the wreath of liberty thereon  
Would fix as smoothly as a cloud,  
Which, at Jove's will, descends on Pelion's top.”

But where and in what lies true liberty? Is it an affair merely of the body, or of one's property, or of one's vote, or of government by king, lords, and commons? No; these are mere negations—the mere absence of restraints. Liberty must be a



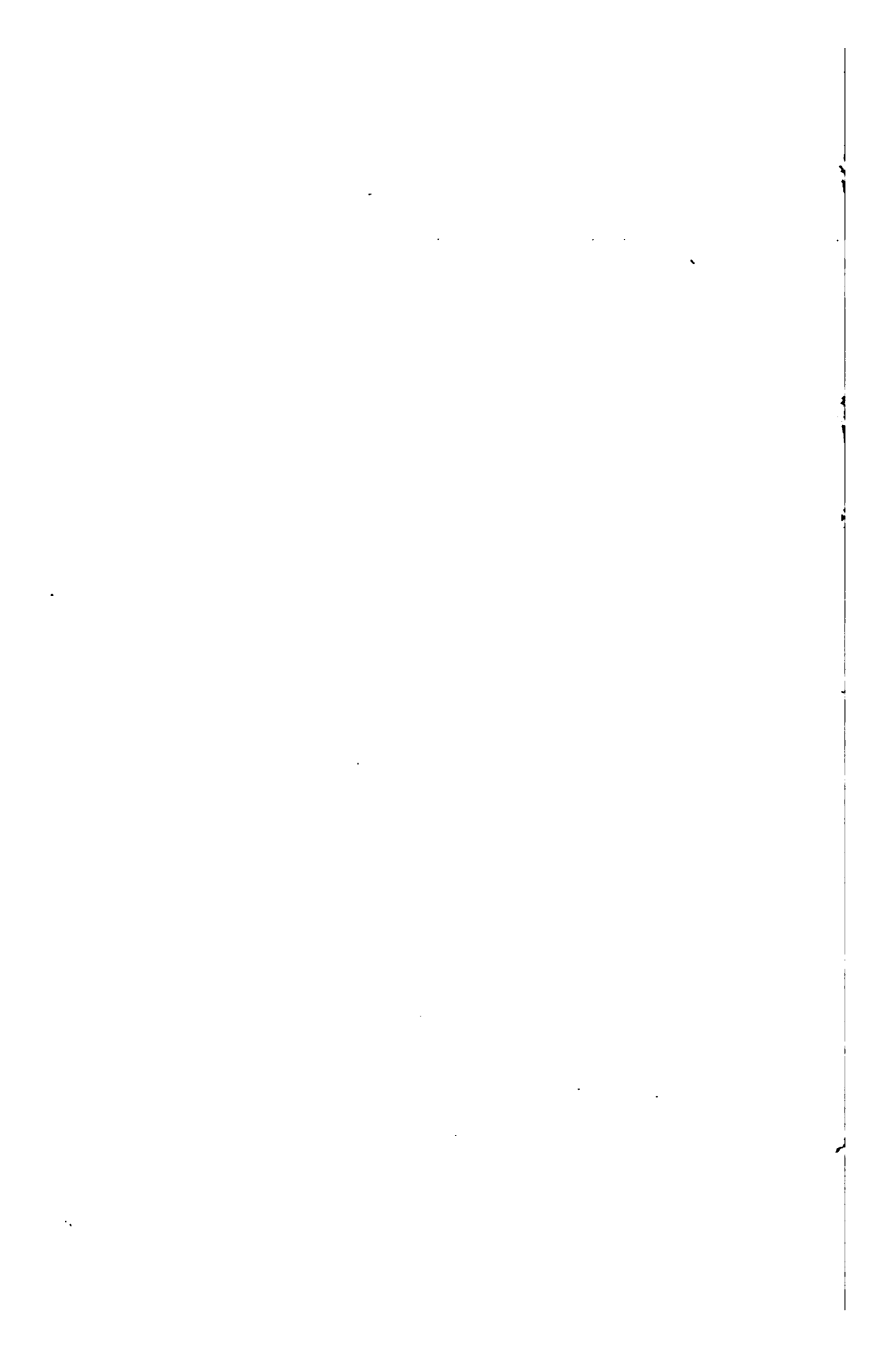
substantive thing ; a positive as it is a potent principle. It is not liberty of thought even. What then is it? It is liberty of conscience. It is the substitution of God's eternally equitable and righteous will in the government of ourselves, and of others for man's arbitrary, capricious, and often unjust will. It is the employment of this as the grand primary motive power that gives liberty. This can be done only by the enfranchisement of conscience, the faculty that takes cognisance of the Supreme Will. Enfranchise conscience, and every other kind of liberty will follow,—will follow by an inevitable necessity ; the liberty of one's body, the liberty of one's goods, the liberty of one's vote,—all will follow. But enslave conscience, and you enslave everything else ; no other kind of liberty will be worth many years', it may be not many hours' purchase. This it is that distinguishes Britain's liberty from all other liberty in the world. There man is free to worship, and wherever man is free to worship, he is free to do everything else which one can do without encroaching on the liberty of one's neighbour. This is the root of that great tree which so many gaze on some

with amazement, some with envy, and which is seen stretching its goodly boughs from pole to pole, and from China to the Western prairies.

There have been many master builders in this great edifice, but one laid the corner-stone. Milton, and all the poets who consecrated their lyre to the service of liberty, were master builders. Locke and Selden, and all the great expositors of law, were master builders. Drake and Nelson, Hampden and Wellington, and all who, by sea or land, routed the foes who aimed a blow at British liberty, were master builders. Chatham and Burke, and our great Parliamentary orators, whose victories over the enemies of liberty within, were not less glorious than those achieved by others without, were master builders. Above all, our great theological thinkers and writers—and the array is a long and brilliant one, from Buchanan and Rutherford, to Owen and Bunyan, and all the great names of the seventeenth century; and from these to M'Crie, Thomson, and Chalmers in latter times—were master builders. Each brought his stone to the edifice. But where are they who laid the corner-stone? Look there. You see these few venerable men, habited

in white, within that circle of fire. What do these men in the midst of the flames? They are depositing, together with their lives, the precious ark of British freedom. British liberty had its birth when the stake was planted for Wishart and Cranmer, and the scaffold set up for Argyle and Russell. Yes, it was the holy and venerable hands of martyrs and confessors that laid the corner-stone of the world-embracing empire of Britain.

THE END.



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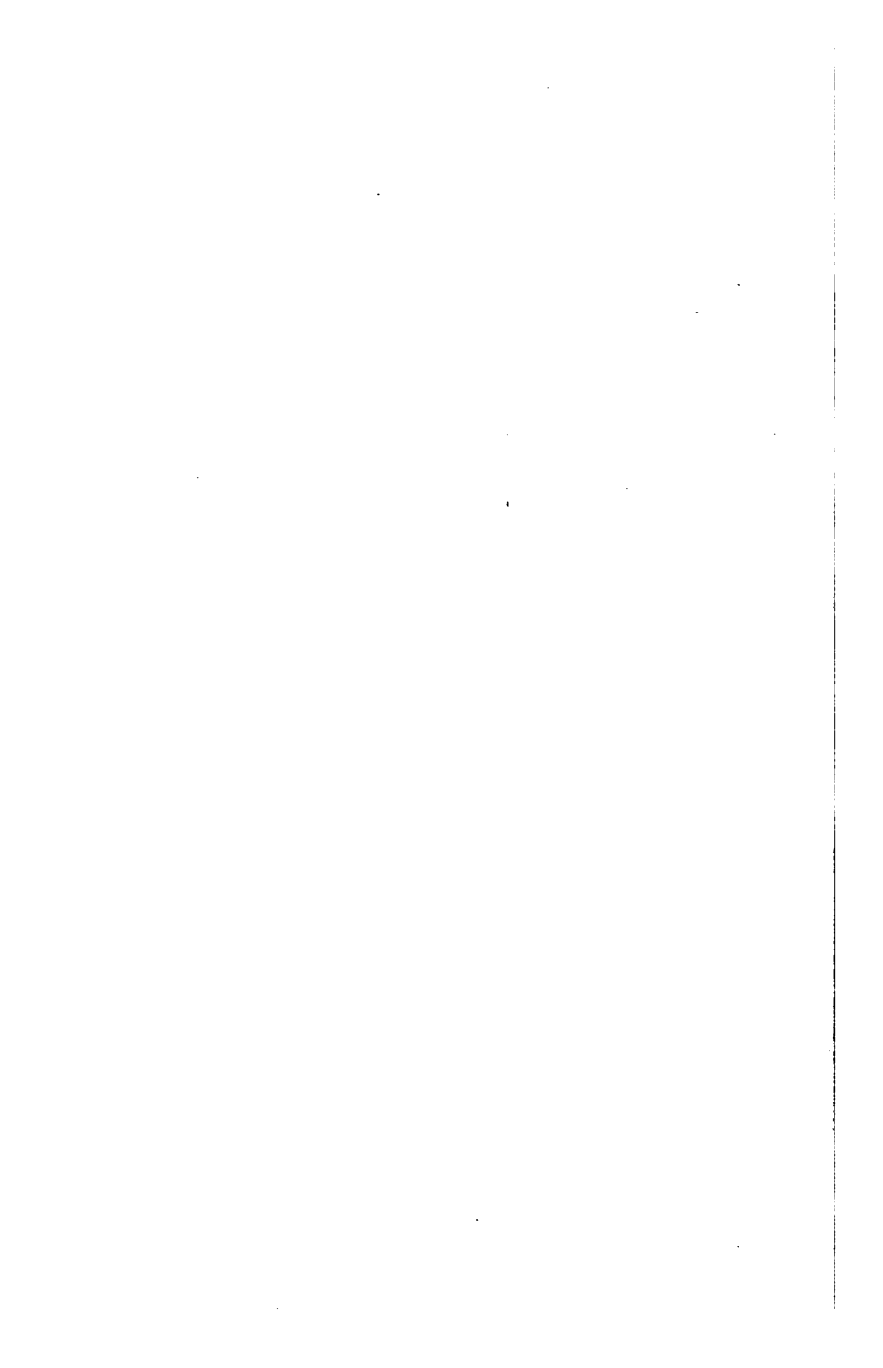
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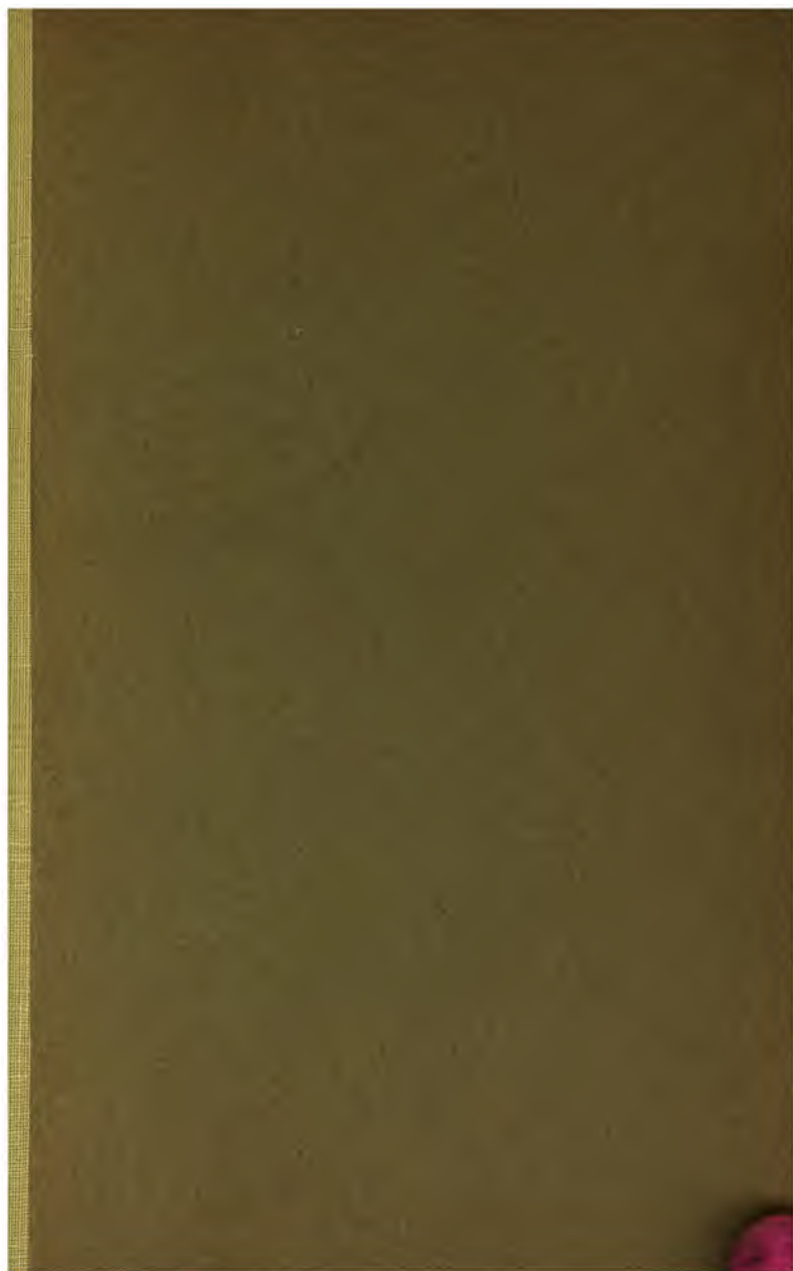
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