

CHAPTER 49 : PERSECUTION OF WALDENSIAN PROTESTANTS ON THE ITALIAN PENINSULA

The Italian peninsula had enjoyed the beginnings of a Protestant Reformation. From the north the Waldensians had spread to other regions, bringing gospel light. And the Reformation produced such Italian Protestant leaders as Peter Martyr Vermigli (1500–1562).

Vermigli joined the Augustinian canons and in that order received high honors as a scholar and preacher. At Naples he was influenced by Juan de Valdés and, accused of heresy, was forbidden to preach for some time. In 1541 he was appointed prior at Lucca, where he became the center of a group known as the Lucchese Reformers. Vermigli began to publicize Protestant views in such doctrinal matters as the interpretation of the Eucharist solely as a spiritual remembrance. But Romanist forces took action to suppress the fledgling Protestant movement. Threatened with arrest, Vermigli, like other Italian reformers, had to flee. Though his services were not welcomed in Italy, they were in England. At the invitation of Archbishop Cranmer, he was made professor at Oxford from 1547 until the restoration of Roman Catholicism by Mary I in 1553. While there, he had some influence on episcopal changes and was consulted about the revision of the Book of Common Prayer. Vermigli returned to Strasbourg as professor; he then went to Zürich, where he was professor of theology from 1556 until his death. Vermigli's works were widely read and were influential in developing a Protestant theology.

So throughout most of the Italian peninsula the Roman Inquisition, combined with the efforts of the Jesuits, were successful in extirpating Protestantism. In Italy the Jesuit Order was especially successful. Designed for the common people, the order found equal acceptance from princes and nobles. In Parma the highest families submitted themselves to the "Spiritual Exercises." In Venice, Lainez expounded the Gospel of St. John to a congregation of nobles; and in 1542 a Jesuits' college was founded in that city. The citizens of Montepulciano accompanied Francisco Strada through the streets begging. Their chief knocked at the doors, and his followers received the alms. In Faenza, they succeeded in arresting the Protestant movement, which had been commenced by the eloquent Bernardino Ochino, and by the machinery of schools and societies for the relief of the poor, they brought back the population to the Papacy. These are but a few instances out of many of their popularity and success.

Although persecution and Jesuit indoctrination rid most of Italy of Protestantism, there still remained the matter of the Waldensian territory. God had preserved them through numerous efforts by Romanist forces to exterminate them over the centuries. But in 1650 the Vaudois were entering within the shadow of their greatest woe. Just as Christ suffered and died during His days on earth, so it was the lot of His people to suffer.

The throne of Savoy was at this time filled by Charles Emmanuel II, a youth of fifteen. He was a prince of mild disposition; but he was counseled and ruled by his mother, the

Duchess Christina, who had been appointed regent of the kingdom during his minority. 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 Henry IV of France and his second wife, Mary de Medici, daughter of Francis II, Duke of Tuscany. The ferocious temper and gloomy superstition of her ancestors, the Medici a name so conspicuously mixed up with the world-execrated massacre of St. Bartholomew in France — had descended to the Duchess Christina.

In no other reign did the tears and blood of the Waldenses flow so profusely, a fact for which we cannot satisfactorily account, unless on the supposition that the sufferings which now overwhelmed them came not from the mild prince who occupied the throne, but from the cold, cruel, and bloodthirsty regent who governed the kingdom. In short, there is reason to believe that it was not the facile spirit of the House of Savoy, but the astute spirit of the Medici, prompted by the Vatican, that enacted those scenes of carnage that we are now to record.

The blow did not descend all at once; a series of lesser attacks heralded the great and consummating stroke. Machinations, chicaneries, and legal robberies paved the way for an extermination that was meant to be complete and final.

First of all came the monks. There had been a literal plague visiting the Valleys of the Waldensians in 1630 which did much harm. But this new plague of Romish monks was far more dangerous. They had been sent to convert the Waldensian “heretics”, and they began by eagerly challenging the pastors to a controversy, in which they felt sure of triumphing. A few attempts, however, convinced them that victory was not to be so easily won as they had fondly thought. The heretics made “a Pope of their Bible” they complained, and as this was a book which the Fathers had not studied, they did not know where to find the passages which they felt sure would confute the Vaudois pastors. They could silence them only by banishing them, and among others whom they drove into exile was the accomplished Antione Leger, the uncle of the historian. Thus were the people deprived of their natural leaders.

The Vaudois were forbidden on pain of confiscation and death to purchase or farm lands outside their own narrow territories. Certain of their churches were closed. Their territory was converted into a prison by an order forbidding them to cross the frontier even for a few hours, unless on fair-days. The wholly Protestant communities of Bobbio, Villaro, Angrogna, and Rora were ordered to maintain each a mission of Capuchins; and foreign Protestants were interdicted from settling in the Valleys under pain of death, and a fine of 1,000 gold crowns upon the communities that should receive them. This law was leveled against their pastors, who, since the plague, were mostly French or Swiss. It was hoped that in a few years the Vaudois would be without ministers. Monts-de-Piete were established to induce the Vaudois, whom confiscations, bad harvests, and the billeting of soldiers had reduced to great straits, to pawn their goods, and when all had been put in pledge they were offered restitution in full on condition of renouncing their faith. Dowries were promised to young maidens on the same terms.

These various arts had a success surprisingly small. Some dozen of Waldensian perverts were added to the Roman Church. It was plain that the good work of proselytizing was proceeding too slowly. More efficient measures must be had recourse to.

The Society for the "Propagation of the Faith," established by Pope Gregory XV in 1622, had already been spread over Italy and France. The object of the society was originally set forth in words sufficiently simple and innocent — "De Propaganda Fidei" (for the Propagation of the Faith). Since the first institution of this society, however, its object had undergone enlargement, or, if not its object, at all events its title. Its first modest designation was supplemented by the emphatic words, "et Extirpandis Haereticis" (and the Extirpation of Heretics). The membership of the society soon became numerous: it included both laymen and priests; all ranks, from the noble and the prelate to the peasant and the pauper, pressed forward to enroll themselves in it—the inducement being a plenary indulgence to all who should take part in the good work so unmistakably indicated in the one brief and pithy clause, "et Extirpandis Hmreticis." The societies in the smaller towns reported to the metropolitan cities; the metropolitan cities to the capital; and the capitals to Rome, where, in the words of Leger, "sat the great spider that held the threads of this mighty web."

In 1650 the "Council of the Propagation of the Faith" was established at Turin. The chief counselors of state, the great lords of the country, and the dignitaries of the Church enrolled themselves as a presiding board. Societies of women were formed, at the head of which was the Marchioness di Pianeza. She was the first lady at court; and as she had not worn "the white rose of a blameless life," she was all the more zealous in this cause, in the hope of making expiation for the errors of the past. She was at infinite pains to further the object of the society; and her own eager spirit she infused into all under her. "The lady propagandists," says Leger : "distributed the towns into districts, and each visited the district assigned to her twice a week, suborning simple girls, servant maids, and young children by their flattering allurements and fair promises, and doing evil turns such as would not listen to them. They had their spies everywhere, who, among other information, ascertained in what Protestant families disagreements existed, and hither would the propagandists repair, stirring up the flame of dissension in order to separate the husband from the wife, the wife from the husband, the children from the parents; promising them, and indeed giving them, great advantages, if they would consent to attend mass. Did they hear of a tradesman whose business was falling off, or of a gentleman who from gambling or otherwise was in want of money, these ladies were at hand with their Dabo tibi (I will give thee), on condition of apostasy; and the prisoner was in like manner relieved from his dungeon, who would give himself up to them. To meet the very heavy expenses of this proselytizing, to keep the machinery at work, to purchase the souls that sold themselves for bread, regular collections were made in the chapels, and in private families, in the shops, in the inns, in the gambling-houses, in the streets—everywhere was alms-begging in operation. The Marchioness of Pianeza herself, great lady as she was, used every second or third day to make a circuit in search of subscriptions, even going into the taverns for that purpose. . If any person of condition, who was believed able to contribute a coin, chanced to arrive at any hotel in town, these ladies did not fail to wait upon him, purse in hand, and solicit a donation. When persons

of substance known to belong to the religion [Reformed] arrived in Turin, they did not scruple to ask money of them for the propagation of the faith, and the influence of the marchioness, or fear of losing their errand and ruining their affairs, would often induce such to comply."

While busied in the prosecution of these schemes the Marchioness di Pianeza was stricken with death. Feeling remorse, and wishing to make atonement, she summoned her lord, from whom she had been parted many years, to her bedside, and charged him, as he valued the repose of her soul and the safety of his own, to continue the good work, on which her heart had been so much set, of converting the Vaudois. To stimulate his zeal, she bequeathed him a sum of money, which, however, he could not touch till he had fulfilled the condition on which it was granted. The marquis undertook the task with the utmost goodwill. A bigot and a soldier, he could think of only one way of converting the Vaudois. It was now that the storm burst.

On the 25th of January, 1655, came the famous order of Gastaldo. This decree commanded all the Vaudois families domiciled in the communes of Lucerua, Fenile, Bubiana, Bricherasio, San Giovanni, and La Torre — in short, the whole of that rich district that separates their capital from the plain of Piedmont—to quit their dwellings within three days, and retire into the Valleys of Bobbio, Angrogna, and Rora. This they were to do on pain of death. They were farther required to sell their lands to Romanists within twenty days. Those who were willing to abjure the Protestant faith were exempted from the decree.

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 an Alpine winter has terrors unknown to the winters of even more northern regions. However could a population like that on which the decree fell, including young children and old men, the sick and bed-ridden, the blind and the lame, undertake a journey across swollen rivers, through valleys buried in snow, and over mountains covered with ice? They must inevitably perish, and the edict that cast them out was but another form of condemning them to die of cold and hunger. "Pray ye," said Christ, when warning his disciples to flee when they should see the Roman armies gathering round Jerusalem, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter." The Romish Propaganda at Turin chose this season for the enforced flight of the Vaudois. Cold were the icy peaks that looked down on this miserable troop, who were now fording the torrents and now struggling up the mountain tracks, but the heart of the persecutor was colder still. True, an alternative was offered them: they might go to mass. Did they avail themselves of it? The historian Leger informs us that he had a congregation of well-nigh 2,000 persons, and that not a man of them all accepted the alternative. "I can well bear them this testimony," he observes, "seeing I was their pastor for eleven years, and I knew every one of them by name; judge, reader, whether I had not cause to weep for joy, as well as for sorrow, when I saw that all the fury of these wolves was not able to influence one of these lambs, and that no earthly advantage could shake their constancy. And when I marked the traces of their blood on the snow and ice over which they had dragged their lacerated limbs, had I not cause to bless God that I had seen accomplished in their poor bodies what remained of the measure of the sufferings of Christ, and

especially when I beheld this heavy cross borne by them with a fortitude so noble?"

The Vaudois of the other valleys welcomed these poor exiles, and joyfully shared with them their own humble and scanty fare. They spread the table for all, and loaded it with polenta and roasted chestnuts, with the milk and butter of their mountains, to which they did not forget to add a cup of that red wine which their valleys produce. Their enemies were amazed when they saw the whole community rise up as one man and depart.

Greater woes trod fast upon the heels of this initial calamity. A part only of the Vaudois nation had suffered from the cruel decree of Gastaldo, but the fixed object of the Propaganda was the extirpation of the entire race, and the matter was gone about with consummate perfidy and 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—and it would have been hard to have exaggerated it—and besought the fulfillment of treaties in which the honor and truth of the House of Savoy were pledged, in language so temperate and just, that one would have thought that their supplication must needs prevail. Alas, no! The ear of their prince had been poisoned by falsehood. Even access to him was denied them. As regarded the Propaganda, their remonstrance, though accompanied with tears and groans, were wholly unheeded. The Vaudois were but charming deaf adders. They were put off with equivocal answers and delusive promises till the fatal 17th of April had arrived, when it was no longer necessary to dissemble and equivocate.

On the day above named, April 17th, 1655, the Marquis di Pianezza departed secretly at midnight from Turin, and appeared before the Valleys at the head of an army of 15,000 men. The Waldensian deputies were by appointment knocking at the door of the marquis in Turin, while he himself was on the road to La Torre. He appeared under the walls of that town at eight o'clock on Saturday evening, the same 17th of April, attended by about 300 men; the main body of his army he had left encamped on the plain. That army, secretly prepared, was composed of Piedmontese, comprehending a good many banditti, who were promised pardon and plunder should they behave themselves well, some companies of Bavarians, six regiments of French, whose thirst for blood the Huguenot wars had not been able to slake, and several companies of Irish Romanists, who, banished by Cromwell, arrived in Piedmont dripping from the massacre of their Protestant fellow-subjects in their native land.

The Waldenses had hastily constructed a barricade at the entrance of La Torre. The marquis ordered his soldiers to storm it; but the besieged resisted so stoutly that, after three hours' fighting, the enemy found he had made no advance. At one o'clock on the Sunday morning, Count Amadeus of Lucerna, who knew the locality, made a flank movement along the banks of the Pelice, stole silently through the meadows and orchards, and, advancing from the opposite quarter, attacked the Vaudois in the rear. They faced round, pierced the ranks of their assailants, and made good their retreat to the hills, leaving La Torre in the hands of the enemy. The Vaudois had lost only three men in all that fighting. It was now between two and three o'clock on Sunday morning, and though the hour was early, the Romanists repaired in a body to the church and chanted a

Te Deum. The day was Palm-Sunday, and in this fashion did the Roman Church, by her soldiers, celebrate in the Waldensian Valleys.

The Vaudois were once more on their mountains. Their families had been previously transported to their natural fastnesses. Their sentinels kept watch night and day along the frontier heights. They could see the movements of Pianeza's army on the plains beneath. They beheld their orchards falling by the axes, and their dwellings being consumed by the torches of the soldiers. On Monday the 19th, and Tuesday the 20th, a series of skirmishes took place along the line of their mountain passes and forts. The Vaudois, though poorly armed and vastly outnumbered—for they were but as one to a hundred—were victorious on all points. The Popish soldiers fell back in ignominious rout, carrying wondrous tales of the Vaudois' valor and heroism to their comrades on the plain, and infusing incipient panic into the camp.

Guilt is ever cowardly. Pianeza now began to have misgivings touching the issue. The recollection that mighty armies had aforesaid perished on these mountains haunted and disquieted him. He betook him to a weapon which the Waldenses have ever been less able to cope with than the sword. On Wednesday, the 21st, before daybreak, he announced, by sound of trumpet at the various Vaudois entrenchments, his willingness to receive their deputies and treat for peace. Delegates set out for his camp, and on their arrival at headquarters were received with the utmost urbanity, and sumptuously entertained. Pianeza expressed the utmost regret for the excesses his soldiers had committed, and which had been done, he said, contrary to orders, he protested that he had come into their valleys only to track a few fugitives who had disobeyed Gastaldo's order, that the higher communes had nothing to fear, and that if they would admit a single regiment each for a few days, in token of their loyalty, all would be amicably ended. The craft of the man conquered the deputies, and despite the warnings of the more sagacious, the pastor Leger in particular, the Waldenses opened the passes of their valleys and the doors of their dwellings to the soldiers of Pianeza.

Alas! alas! these poor people were undone. They had received under their roof the murderers of themselves and their families. The first two days, the 22nd and 23rd of April, were passed in comparative peace, the soldiers eating at the same table, sleeping under the same roof, and conversing freely with their destined victims. This interval was needed to allow every preparation to be made for what was to follow. The enemy now occupied the towns, the villages, the cottages, and the roads throughout the valleys. They hung upon the heights. Two great passes led into France: the one over the snows of the lofty Col Julten, and the other by the Valley of Queyras into Dauphine. But, alas! escape was not possible by either outlet. No one could traverse the Col Julten at this season and live, and the fortress of Mirabouc, that guarded the narrow gorge which led into the Valley of Queyras, the enemy had been careful to secure. The Vaudois were enclosed as in a net—shut in as in a prison.

At last the blow fell with the sudden crash of the thunderbolt. At four o'clock on the morning of Saturday, the 24th of April, 1655, the signal was given from the castle-hill of La Torre. But who shall rehearse the tragedy that followed? "It is Cain a second time,"

says Monastier, "shedding the blood of his brother Abel." On the instant a thousand assassins began the work of death. Dismay, horror, agony, woe in a moment overspread the Valleys of Lucerna and Angrogna. Though Pandemonium had sent forth its fiends to riot in crime and revel in blood, they could not have outdone the soldiers of the Propaganda. We see the victims climbing the hills with what speed they are able, the murderer on their track. We see the torrents as they roll down from the heights beginning to be tinged with blood. Gleams of lurid light burst out through the dark smoke that is rolling through the vales, for a priest and monk accompany each party of soldiers, to set fire to the houses as soon as the inmates have been dispatched. Alas! what sounds are these that fall upon our ears.

The cries and groans of the dying are echoed and re-echoed from the rocks around, and it seems as if the mountains had taken up a wailing for the slaughter of their children. "Our Valley of Lucerna," exclaims Leger, "which was like a Goshen, was now converted into a Mount Etna, darting forth cinders and fire and flames. The earth resembled a furnace, and the air was filled with a darkness like that of Egypt, which might be felt, from the smoke of towns, villages, temples, mansions, granges, and buildings, all burning in the flames of the Vatican."

The soldiers were not content with the quick dispatch of the sword; they invented new and hitherto unheard-of modes of torture and death. No man at this day dare write in plain words all the disgusting and horrible deeds of these men; their wickedness can never be all known, because it never can be all told.

From the awful narration of Leger we select only a few instances; but even these few, however mildly stated, grow, without our intending it, into a group of horrors. Little children were torn from the arms of their mothers, clasped by their tiny feet, and their heads dashed against the rocks; or were held between two soldiers and their quivering limbs torn up by main force. Their mangled bodies were then thrown on the highways or fields, to be devoured by beasts. The sick and the aged were burned alive in their dwellings. Some had their hands and arms and legs lopped off, and fire applied to the severed parts to staunch the bleeding and prolong their suffering. Some were flayed alive, some were roasted alive, some disemboweled; or tied to trees in their own orchards, and their hearts cut out. Some were horribly mutilated, and of others the brains were boiled and eaten by these cannibals. Some were fastened down into the furrows of their own fields, and ploughed into the soil as men plough manure into it. Others were buried alive. Fathers were marched to death with the heads of their sons suspended round their necks. Parents were compelled to look on while their children were first outraged, then massacred, before being themselves permitted to die. But here we must stop. We cannot proceed farther in Leger's awful narration. There come vile, abominable and monstrous deeds, utterly and overwhelmingly disgusting, horrible and fiendish, which we dare not transcribe. The heart sickens, and the brain begins to swim. "My hand trembles," says Leger, "so that I scarce even hold the pen, and my tears mingle in torrents with my ink, while I write the deeds of these children of darkness—blackier even than the Prince of Darkness himself." These human demons killed the people of God, just like the wicked had cruelly killed their Lord.

No general account, however awful, can convey so correct an idea of the horrors of this persecution as would the history of individual cases; but this we are precluded from giving. Could we take these martyrs one by one— could we describe the tragic fate of Peter Simeon of Angrogna— the barbarous death of Magdalene, wife of Peter Pilon of Villare—the sad story—but no, that story could not 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 his skin, divided into four parts, extended on the window gratings of the four principal houses in Lucerna—could we describe these cases, with hundreds of others equally horrible and appalling, our narrative would grow so harrowing that our readers, unable to proceed, would turn from the page. Literally did the Waldenses suffer all the things of which the Apostle speaks, as endured by the martyrs of old, with other torments not then invented, or which the rage of even a Nero shrank from inflicting:—"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 form a scene that is unparalleled and unique in the history of at least civilized countries. There have been tragedies in which more blood was spilt, and more life sacrificed, but none in which the actors were so completely dehumanized, and the forms of suffering so monstrously disgusting, so unutterably cruel and revolting. The "Piedmontese Massacres" in this respect stand alone. They are more fiendish than all the atrocities and murders before or since, and Leger may still advance his challenge to "all travelers, 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 such execrable perfidies and barbarities."

The authors of these deeds, thinking it may be that their very atrocity would make the world slow to believe them, made bold to deny that they had ever been done, even before the blood was well dry in the Valleys. Pastor Leger took instant and effectual means to demonstrate the falsehood of that denial, and to provide that clear, irrefragable, and indubitable proof of these awful crimes should go down to posterity. He traveled from commune to commune, immediately after the massacre, attended by notaries, who took down the depositions and attestations of the survivors and eye-witnesses of these deeds, in presence of the council and consistory of the place. From the evidence of these witnesses he compiled and gave to the world a book, which Dr. Gilly truly characterized as one of the most "dreadful" in existence. The originals of these depositions Leger 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.

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 adds, "that the fugitives, who had been snatched as brands from the burning, could address God in the words of the 79th Psalm, which literally and emphatically describes their condition:—

"O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritances,
Thy holy 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 abated, Leger assembled the scattered survivors, in order to take counsel with them as to the steps to be now taken. It does not surprise us to find that some had begun to entertain the idea of abandoning the Valleys altogether. Leger strongly dissuaded them against the thought of forsaking their ancient inheritance. 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 undertook to lay a representation of their sufferings and broken condition before their brethren of other countries, who, he was sure, would hasten to their help at this great crisis. These counsels prevailed. "Our tears are no longer of water," so wrote the remnant of the slaughtered Vaudois 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 moderation of which contrasts strongly with the extent of their wrongs. Protestant Europe was horror-struck when the tale of the massacre was laid before it.

Nowhere did these awful tidings awaken a deeper sympathy or kindle a stronger indignation than in England. Cromwell, who in many other respects we must be critical, in this instance we must highly commend. By this time he had overthrown the English Long Parliament of the Presbyterians, and made himself the head of the State. He proclaimed a fast in England, ordered a collection for the sufferers, and wrote to all the Protestant princes, and to the King of France, with the intent of enlisting their sympathy and aid in behalf of the Vaudois. In token of the deep interest he took in this affair, Cromwell sent Sir Samuel Morland with a letter to the Duke of Savoy, expressive of the astonishment and sorrow he felt at the barbarities which had been committed on those who were his brethren in the faith.

Cromwell's ambassador visited the Valleys on his way to Turin, and saw with his own eyes the frightful spectacle which the region still presented. "If," said he, addressing the duke, the horrors he had just seen giving point to his eloquence, and kindling his republican plainness into Puritan fervor, "If 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!"

The next tragic episode in the history of the Waldenses takes us to the Valley of Rora. The invasion and outrages of which this valley became the scene were contemporaneous with the horrors of the Great Massacre. In what we are now to relate, feats of heroism are blended with deeds of suffering, and we are called to admire the valor of the patriot, as well as the patience of the martyr.

The Valley of Rora lies on the left as one enters La Torre; it is separated from Lucerna by a barrier of mountains. Rora has two entrances: one by a side ravine, which branches off about two miles before reaching La Torre, and the other by crossing the Valley of Lucerna and climbing the mountains. This last is worthy of being briefly described. We start, we shall suppose, from the town of La Torre. We skirt the Castelluzzo on the right, which high in air hangs its precipices, with their many tragic memories, above us. From this point we turn to the left, descend into the valley, traverse its bright meadows, here shaded by the vine which stretches its arms in classic freedom from tree to tree. We cross the torrent of the Pelice by a small bridge, and hold on our way till we reach the foot of the mountains of La Combe, that wall in the Valley of Rora. We begin to climb by a winding path. Pasturage and vineyard give place to chestnut forest; the chestnut in its turn yields to the pine. And, as we mount still higher, we find ourselves amid the naked ledges of the mountain, with their gushing rills, margined by moss or other Alpine herbage.

An ascent of two hours brings us to the summit of the pass. We have here a pedestal, some 4,000 feet in height, in the midst of a stupendous amphitheater of Alps, from which to view their glories. How profoundly deep the valley from which we have just climbed up! A thread of silver is now the Pelice; a patch of green a few inches square is now the meadow; the chestnut-tree is a mere dot, hardly visible; and yonder are La Torre and the white Villaro, so tiny that they look as if they could be packed into a child's toy-box.

But while all else has diminished, the mountains seem to have enlarged their bulk and increased their stature, high above us towers the summit of the Castelluzzo; still higher rise the rolling masses of the Vandalin, the lower slopes of which form a vast and magnificent hanging garden, utterly dwarfing those of which we read as one of the wonders of Babylon. And in the far distance the eye rests on a tumultuous sea of mountains, here rising in needles, there running off in long serrated ridges, and there standing up in massy peaks of naked granite, wearing the shining garments which winter weaves for the giants of the Alps.

We now descend into the Valley of Rora. It lies at our feet, a cup of verdure, some sixty miles in circumference, its sides and bottom variously clothed with corn-field and meadow, with vineyard and orchard, with the walnut, the cherry, and all fruit-bearing

trees, from amid which numerous brown chalets peep out. The great mountains sweep round the valley like a wall, and among them, preeminent in glory as in stature, stands the monarch of the Cottian Alps—Monte Viso.

As among the Jews of old, so among the Waldenses, God raised up, from time to time, mighty men of valor to deliver his people. One of the most remarkable of these men was Gianavello, commonly known as Captain Joshua Gianavello, a native of this same Valley of Rora. He appears, from the accounts that have come down to us, 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 had the faculty so essential in a commander, of skillful combination. He was fertile in resource, and self possessed in emergencies; he was quick to resolve, and prompt to execute. His devotion and energy were the means, under God, 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. It was the morning of the 24th of April, 1655, the day which saw the butchery commenced that we have described above. On that same day 500 soldiers were dispatched by the Marquis di Pianeza to the Valley of Rora, to massacre its unoffending and unsuspecting inhabitants. Ascending from the Valley of the Pelice, they had gained the summit of the pass, and were already descending on the town of Rora, stealthily and swiftly, as a herd of wolves might descend upon a sheep-fold, or as, says Leger, "a brood of vultures might descend upon a flock of harmless doves." Happily Gianavello, who had known for weeks before that a storm was gathering, though he knew not when or where it would burst, was on the outlook. He saw the troop, and guessed their errand.

There was not a moment to be lost; a little longer, and not a man would be left alive in Rora to carry tidings of its fate to the next commune. But was Gianavello single-handed to attack an army of 500 men? He stole uphill, under cover of the rocks and trees, and on his way he prevailed on six peasants, brave men like himself, to join him in repelling the invaders. The heroic little band marched on until they were near the troop, then hiding amid the bushes, they lay in ambush by the side of the path. The soldiers came on, little suspecting the trap into which they were marching.

Gianavello and his men fired, and with so unerring an aim that seven of the troop fell dead. Then, reloading their pieces, and dexterously changing their ground, they fired again with a like effect. The attack was unexpected; the foe was invisible; the frightened imaginations of Pianeza's soldiers multiplied tenfold the number of their assailants. They began to retreat. But Gianavello and his men, bounding from cover to cover like so many chamois, hung upon their rear, and did deadly execution with their bullets. The invaders left fifty-four of their number dead behind them; and thus did these seven peasants chase from their Valley of Rora the 500 assassins who had come to murder its peaceful inhabitants.

That same afternoon the people of Rora, who were ignorant of the fearful murders which were at that very moment proceeding in the valleys of their brethren, repaired to the Marquis di Pianeza to complain of the attack. The marquis affected ignorance of the whole affair. "Those who invaded your valley," said he, "were a set of banditti. You did

right to repel them. Go back to your families and fear nothing; I pledge my word and honor that no evil shall happen to you."

These deceitful words did not impose upon Gianavello. He had a wholesome recollection of the maxim enacted by the Council of Constance, and so often put in practice in the Valleys, "No faith is to be kept with heretics." Pianeza, he knew, was the agent of the "Council of Extirpation." Hardly had the next morning broke when the hero-peasant was abroad, scanning with eagle-eye the mountain paths that led into his valley. It was not long until his suspicions were more than justified. Six hundred men-at-arms, chosen with special reference to this difficult enterprise, were seen ascending the mountain Cassuleto, to do what their comrades of the previous day had failed to accomplish. Gianavello had now mustered a little host of eighteen, of whom twelve were armed with muskets and swords, and six with only the sling. These he divided into three parties, each consisting of four musketeers and two slingers, and he posted them in a defile, through which he saw the invaders must pass. No sooner had the van of the enemy entered the gorge than a shower of bullets and stones from invisible hands saluted them. Every bullet and stone did its work. The first discharge brought down an officer and twelve men. That volley was succeeded by others equally fatal. The cry was raised, "All is lost, save yourselves!" The flight was precipitate, for every bush and rock seemed to vomit forth deadly missiles. Thus a second ignominious retreat rid the Valley of Rora of these murderers.

The inhabitants carried their complaints a second time to Pianeza. "Concealing," as Leger says, "the ferocity of the tiger under the skin of the fox," he assured the deputies that the attack had been the result of a misunderstanding; that certain accusations had been lodged against them, the falsity of which had since been discovered, and now they might return to their homes, for they had nothing to fear. No sooner were they gone than Pianeza began vigorously to prepare for a third attack.

He organized a battalion of from 800 to 900 men. Next morning, this host made a rapid march on Rora, seized all the avenues leading into the valley, and chasing the inhabitants to the caves in Monte Friolante, set fire to their dwellings, having first plundered them. Captain Joshua Gianavello, at the head of his little troop, saw the enemy enter, but their numbers were so overwhelming that he waited a more favorable moment for attacking them. The soldiers were retiring, laden with their booty, and driving before them the cattle of the peasants. Gianavello knelt down before his hero-band, and giving thanks to God, who had twice by his hand saved his people, he prayed that the hearts and arms of his followers might be strengthened, to work yet another deliverance. He then attacked the foe. The spoilers turned and fled uphill, in the hope of escaping into the Valley of the Pelice, throwing away their booty in their flight. When they had gained the pass, and begun their descent, their flight became yet more disastrous; great stones, torn up and rolled after them, were mingled with the bullets, and did deadly execution upon them, while the precipices over which they fell in their haste consummated their destruction. The few who survived fled to Villaro.

The Marquis di Pianeza, instead of seeing in these events the finger of God, was only the more inflamed with rage, and the more resolutely bent on the extirpation of every heretic

from the Valley of Rora. He assembled all the royal troops then under his command, or which could be spared from the massacre in which they were occupied in the other valleys, in order to surround the little territory. This was now the fourth attack on the commune of Rora, but the invaders were destined once more to recoil before the shock of its heroic defenders. Some 8,000 men had been got under arms, and were ready to march against Rora, but the impatience of a certain Captain Mario, who had signalized himself in the massacre at Bobbio, and wished to appropriate the entire glory of the enterprise, would not permit him to await the movement of the main body. He marched two hours in advance, with three companies of regular troops, few of whom ever returned. Their ferocious leader, borne along by the rush of his panic-stricken soldiers, was precipitated over the edge of the rock into the stream, and badly bruised. He was drawn out and carried to Lucerna, where he died two days afterwards, in great torment of body, and yet greater torment of mind. Of the three companies which he led in this fatal expedition, one was composed of Irish, who had been banished by Cromwell, and who met in this distant land the death they had inflicted on others in their own, leaving their corpses to fatten those valleys which were to have been theirs, had they succeeded in purging them of Protestants.

This series of strange events was now drawing to an end. The fury of Pianeza knew no bounds. This war of his, though waged only with herdsmen, had brought him nothing but disgrace, and the loss of his bravest soldiers. Victor Amadeus once observed that "the skin of every Vaudois cost him fifteen of his best Piedmontese soldiers." Pianeza had lost some hundreds of his best soldiers, and yet not one of the little troop of Gianavello, dead or alive, had he been able to get into his hands.

Nevertheless, he resolved to continue the struggle, but with a much greater army. He assembled 10,000, and attacked Rora on three sides at once. While Gianavello was bravely combating with the first troop of 3,000, on the summit of the pass that gives entrance from the Valley of the Pelice, a second of 6,000 had entered by the ravine at the foot of the valley; and a third of 1,000 had crossed the mountains that divide Bagnolo from Rora. But, alas! who shall describe the horrors that followed the entrance of these assassins? Blood, burning, and rapine in an instant overwhelmed the little community. No distinction was made of age or sex. None had pity for their tender years; none had reverence for their grey hairs. Happy they who were slain at once, and thus escaped horrible indignities and tortures. The few spared from the sword were carried away as captives, and among these were the wife and the three daughters of Gianavello.

There was now nothing more in the Valley of Rora for which the patriot-hero could do battle. The light of his hearth was quenched, his village was a heap of smoking ruins, his fathers and brethren had fallen by the sword; but rising superior to these accumulated calamities, he marched his little troop over the mountains, to await on the frontier of his country whatever opportunities Providence might yet open to him of wielding his sword in defense of the glorious faith of his people.

It was at this time that Pianeza, intending to deal the finishing blow that should crush the hero of Rora, wrote to Gianavello as follows:—"I exhort you for the last time to renounce

your heresy. This is the only hope of your 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." To these ferocious threats Gianavello magnanimously and promptly replied: "There are no torments so terrible, no death so barbarous, that I would not choose rather than deny my Savior. Your threats cannot cause me to renounce my faith; they but fortify me in it. Should the Marquis di Pianeza 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." We do not know whether Pianeza was capable of seeing that this was the most mortifying defeat he had yet sustained at the hands of the peasant-hero of Rora; and that he might as well war against the Alps themselves as against a cause that could infuse a spirit like this into its champions. Gianavello's reply, observes Leger, "certified him as a chosen instrument in the hands of God for the recovery of his country seemingly lost."

Gianavello 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 Lucerna 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 Giaheri, under whom a troop had been assembling to avenge the massacre of their brethren.

In Giaheri, Captain Gianavello 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 500 men were all that the two leaders could collect around their standard. The army opposed to them, and at this time 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 the courage of these two Christian warriors was based on faith. They believed that God would not permit his cause to perish, or the lamp of the Valleys to be extinguished; and, few though they were, they knew that God was able by their humble instrumentality to save their country and church. In this faith they unsheathed the sword to defend their ancient communities; 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 valor were performed by this little host. "I had always considered the Vaudois to be men," said Descombies, who had joined them, "but I found them lions." Nothing could withstand the fury of their attack. Post after post and village after village were wrested from the Piedmontese troops. Soon the enemy was driven from the upper valleys. The war now passed down into the plain of Piedmont, and there it was waged with the same heroism and the same success. They besieged and took several towns, they fought not a few pitched battles; and in nearly all of them they were victorious, though opposed by more than ten times their number. Their success could hardly 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 infrequently did it happen at the close of a day's fighting, that 1,400 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 Barbers."

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 traveling to all the Protestant States of Europe. Wherever these tidings came a feeling of horror was evoked, and 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 it to be their clear duty to move in behalf of this poor and greatly oppressed people; and foremost among those who did themselves honor by interposing in behalf of a people "drawn unto death and ready to perish," was, as we have already said, England, then under the Protectorate of Cromwell. Cromwell wrote to Louis XIV of France, soliciting his mediation with the duke on behalf of the Vaudois. But soliciting the assistance of such a wicked Romanist was no better than soliciting the assistance of the devil.

The French King undertook the mediation, as requested by the Protestant princes, but hurried it to a conclusion before the ambassadors from the Protestant States had arrived. The delegates from the Protestant cantons of Switzerland were present, but they were permitted to act the part of onlookers simply. The Grand Monarch took the whole affair upon himself, and on the 18th of August, 1655, a treaty of peace was concluded of a very disadvantageous kind. They were stripped of their ancient possessions on the right bank of the Pelice, lying toward the plain of Piedmont. Within the new boundary they were guaranteed liberty of worship; an amnesty was granted for all offenses committed during the war; captives were to be restored when claimed; and they were to be exempt from all imposts for five years, on the ground that they were so impoverished as not to be able to pay anything.

When the treaty was published it was found to contain two clauses that astonished the Protestant world. In the preamble the Vaudois were styled rebels, whom it had pleased their prince graciously to receive back into favor; and in the body of the deed was an article, which no one recollected to have heard mentioned during the negotiations,

empowering the French to construct a fort above La Torre. This looked like a preparation for renewing the war.

By this treaty the Protestant States, including England under Cromwell, were outwitted; their ambassadors were duped; and the poor Vaudois were left as much as ever in the power of the Duke of Savoy and of the Council for the Propagation of the Faith, and the Extirpation of Heretics.

After the Great Massacre of 1655, the Church of the Valleys had rest from persecution for thirty years. This period, however, can be styled one of rest only when contrasted with the frightful storms which had convulsed the era that immediately preceded it. The enemies of the Vaudois still found innumerable ways in which to annoy and harass them. Ceaseless intrigues were continually breeding new alarms, and the Vaudois had often to till their fields and prune their vines with their musket slung across their shoulders. Many of their chief men were sent into exile.

Captain Gianavello and Pastor Leger, whose services to their people were too great ever to be forgiven, had sentence of death passed on them. Leger was "to be strangled; then his body was to be hung by one foot on a gibbet for four-and-twenty hours; and, lastly, his head was to be cut off and publicly exposed at San Giovanni. His name was to be inserted in the list of noted outlaws; his houses were to be burned." Gianavello retired to Geneva, where he continued to watch with unabated interest the fortunes of his people. Leger became pastor of a congregation at Leyden, where he crowned a life full of labor and suffering for the gospel, by a work which has laid all Christendom under obligations to him. We refer to his History of the churches of the Vaudois—a noble monument of his church's martyr-heroism and his own Christian patriotism.

Hardly had Leger unrolled to the world's gaze the record of the last awful tempest which had smitten the Valleys, when the clouds returned, and were seen rolling up in dark, thunderous masses against this devoted land. Former storms had assailed them from the south, having collected in the Vatican; the tempest now approaching had its first rise on the north of the Alps. It was the year 1685. Louis XIV inquired of his confessor by what good deed as a king he might atone for his many sins as a man. The answer was ready. He was told that he must extirpate Protestantism in France.

The Grand Monarch, as the age styled him, bowed obsequiously before the shaven crown of priest, while Europe was trembling before his armies. Louis XIV did as he was commanded; he revoked the Edict of Nantes. This gigantic crime, which inflicted so much misery on the Protestants in the first place, and brought so many woes on the throne and nation of France in the second. It is the nation of the Vaudois, and the persecution which the counsel of Father la Chaise brought upon them, with which we have here to do. Wishing for companionship in the sanguinary work of purging France from Protestantism, Louis XIV, sent an ambassador to the Duke of Savoy, with a request that he would deal with the Waldenses as he was now dealing with the Huguenots. The young Victor Amadeus was at the moment on more than usually friendly terms with his subjects of the Valleys. They had served bravely under his standard in his late war with

the Genoese, and he had but recently written them a letter of thanks.

How could he unsheathe his sword against the men whose devotion and valor had so largely contributed to his victory? Victor Amadeus deigned no reply to the French ambassador. The request was repeated; it received an evasive answer; it was urged a third time, accompanied by a hint from the potent Louis that if it was not convenient for the duke to purge his dominions, the King of France would do it for him with an army of 14,000 men, and would keep the Valleys for his pains. This was enough. A treaty was immediately concluded between the duke and the French King, in which the latter promised an armed force to enable the former to reduce the Vaudois to the Roman obedience, or to exterminate them. On the 31st of January, 1686, the following edict was promulgated in the Valleys:—

- "1. The Vaudois shall henceforth and for ever cease and discontinue all the exercises of their religion.
- "2. They are forbidden to have religious meetings, under pain of death, and penalty of confiscation of all their goods.
- "3. All their ancient privileges are abolished.
- "4. All the churches, prayer-houses, and other edifices consecrated to their worship shall be razed to the ground.
- "5. All the pastors and schoolmasters of the Valleys are required either to embrace Romanism or to quit the country within fifteen days, under pain of death and confiscation of goods.
- "6. All the children born, or to be born, of Protestant parents, shall be compulsorily trained up as Roman Catholics. Every such child yet unborn shall, within a week after its birth, be brought to the cure of its parish, and admitted of the Roman Catholic Church, under pain, on the part of the mother, of being publicly whipped with rods, and on the part of the father of laboring five years in the galleys.
- "7. The Vaudois pastors shall abjure the doctrine they have hitherto publicly preached; shall receive a salary, greater by one-third than that which they previously enjoyed; and one-half thereof shall go in reversion to their widows.
- "8. All Protestant foreigners settled in Piedmont are ordered either to become Roman Catholics, or to quit the country within fifteen days.
- "9. By a special act of his great and paternal clemency, the sovereign will permit persons to sell, in this interval, the property they may have acquired in Piedmont, provided the sale be made to Roman Catholic purchasers."

This monstrous edict, seeking to replace true religion with false religion, seemed to sound the knell of the Vaudois as a Protestant people. Their oldest traditions did not contain a decree so cruel and unrighteous, nor one that menaced them with so complete and summary a destruction as that which now seemed to impend over them. What was to be done! Their first step was to send delegates to Turin, respectfully to remind the duke that the Vaudois had inhabited the Valleys from the earliest times; that they had led forth their herds upon their mountains before the House of Savoy had ascended the throne of Piedmont; that treaties and oaths, renewed from reign to reign, had solemnly secured them in their worship and other liberties; and that the honor of princes and the stability of states lay in the faithful observance of such covenants; and they prayed him to consider what reproach the throne and kingdom of Piedmont would incur if he should become the executioner of those of whom he was the natural protector.

The Protestant cantons of Switzerland joined their mediation to the intercessions of the Waldenses. And when the almost incredible edict came to be known in Germany and Holland, these countries threw their shield over the Valleys, by interceding with the duke that he would not inflict so great a wrong as to cast out from a land which was theirs by irrevocable charters, a people whose only crime was that they worshipped as their fathers had worshipped according to the truth, before they passed under the scepter of the duke.

All these powerful parties pleaded in vain. Ancient charters, solemn treaties, and oaths, made in the face of Europe, the long-tryed loyalty and the many services of the Vaudois to the House of Savoy, could not stay the uplifted arm of the duke, or prevent the execution of the monstrously criminal decree. In a little while the armies of France and Savoy arrived before the Valleys.

At no previous period of their history, perhaps, had the Waldenses been so entirely devoid of human aid as now. Romanists were zealous to extinguish all territory under Biblical Protestant rule, as they always have been. Gianavello, whose stout heart and brave arm had stood them in such stead formerly, was in exile. An avowed Papist filled the throne of Great Britain. It was going in at this hour with Protestantism everywhere. The Covenanters of Scotland were hiding on the moors, or dying in the Grass-market of Edinburgh. France, Piedmont, and Italy were closing in around the Valleys; every path guarded, all their succors cut off, an overwhelming force waited the signal to massacre them. So desperate did their situation appear to the Swiss envoys, that they counseled them to "transport elsewhere the torch of the gospel, and not keep it here to be extinguished in blood."

The proposal to abandon their ancient inheritance, coming from such a quarter, startled the Waldense. It produced, at first, a division of opinion in the Valleys; but ultimately they united in rejecting it. They remembered the exploits their fathers had done, and the wonders God had wrought in the mountain passes of Rora, in the defiles of Angrogna, and in the field of the Pra del Tor, and their faith reviving, they resolved, in a reliance on the same Almighty Arm which had been stretched out in their behalf in former days, to defend their hearths and altars. They repaired the old defenses, and made ready for resistance: On the 17th of April, they renewed their covenant, as the people of God have

been wont to do throughout history. On Sunday their pastors dispensed to them the Communion. This was the last time the sons of the Valleys partook of the Lord's Supper before their great dispersion.

Victor Amadeus II had pitched his camp on the plain of San Geronzo before the Vaudois Alps. His army consisted of five regiments of horse and foot. He was here joined by the French auxiliaries who had crossed the Alps, consisting of some dozen battalions, the united force amounting to between 15,000 and 20,000 men. The signal was to be given on Monday, at break of day, by three cannon-shots, fired from the hill of Bricherasio. On the appointed morning, the Valleys of Lucerna and San Martino, forming the two extreme opposite points of the territory, were attacked, the first by the Piedmontese host, and the last by the French, under the command of General Catthat, a distinguished soldier. In San Martino the fighting lasted ten hours, and ended in the complete repulse of the French, who retired at night with a loss of more than 500 killed and wounded, while the Vaudois had lost only two. On the following day the French, burning with rage at their defeat, poured a more numerous army into San Martino, which swept along the valley, burning, plundering, and massacring, and having crossed the mountains descended into Pramol, continuing the same indiscriminate and exterminating vengeance. To the rage of the sword were added other barbarities and outrages too shocking to be narrated.

The issue by arms being deemed uncertain, despite the vast disparity of strength, treachery, on a great scale, was now had recourse to. Wherever, throughout the Valleys, the Vaudois were found strongly posted, and ready for battle, they were told that their brethren in the neighboring communes had submitted, and that it was vain for them, isolated and alone as they now were, to continue their resistance. When they sent deputies to headquarters to inquire—and passes were freely supplied to them for that purpose—they were assured that the submission had been universal, and that none save themselves were now in arms. They were assured, moreover, that should they follow the example of the rest of their nation, all their ancient liberties would be held intact. This base artifice was successfully practiced at each of the Vaudois posts in succession, till at length the Valleys had all capitulated. The mistake, alas! was a fatal one, and had to be expiated afterwards by the endurance of woes a hundred times more dreadful than any they would have encountered in the rudest campaign. The instant consequence of the submission was a massacre which extended to all their Valleys, and which was similar in its horrors to the great butcher of 1655. In that massacre upwards of 3,000 perished. The remainder of the nation, amounting, according to Arnaud, to between 12,000 and 15,000 souls, were consigned to the various gaols and fortresses of Piedmont.

We now behold these famous Valleys, for the first time in their history, empty. The ancient lamp burns no longer. The school of the prophets in the Pra del Tor is razed. No smoke is seen rising from cottage, and no psalm is heard ascending from dwelling or sanctuary. No herdsman leads forth his kine on the mountains, and no troop of worshippers, obedient to the summons of the Sabbath-bell, climbs the mountain paths. The vine flings wide her arms, but no skillful hand is nigh to train her boughs and prune her luxuriance. The chestnut-tree rains its fruits, but there is no group of merry children

to gather them, and they lie rotting on the ground. The terraces of the hills, that were wont to overflow with flowers and fruitage, and which presented to the eye a series of hanging gardens, now torn and breached, shoot in a mass of ruinous rubbish down the slope. Nothing is seen but dismantled forts, and the blackened ruins of churches and hamlets. A dreary silence overspreads the land, and the beasts of the field strangely multiply. A few herdsmen, hidden here and there in forests and holes of the rocks, are now the only inhabitants. Monte Viso, from out the silent vault, looks down with astonishment 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 at eve the friendly mantle of his purple shadows.

We know not if ever before an entire nation were in prison at once. Yet now it was so. All of the Waldensian race that remained from the sword of their executioners were immured in the dungeons of Piedmont! The pastor and his flock, the father and his family, the patriarch and the stripling had passed in, in one great procession, and exchanged their grand rock-walled Valleys, their tree-embowered homes, and their sunlit peaks, for the filth, the choking air, and the Tartarean walls of an Italian gaol. 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 broke out in these horrible abodes, and 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, 3,000 skeletons only crawled out." These few words portray a tragedy so awful that the imagination recoils from the contemplation of it.

Well, at length the persecutor looses their chains, and opening their prison doors he sends forth these captives—the woe-worn remnant of a gallant people. But to what are they sent forth? To people again their ancient Valleys? To rekindle the fire on their ancestral hearths? To rebuild "the holy and beautiful house" in which their fathers had praised God? Ah, no! They are thrust out of prison only to be sent into exile—to Vaudois a living death.

The barbarity of 1655 was repeated. It was in December 1686 that the decree of liberation was issued in favor of these 3,000 men who had escaped the sword, and now survived the not less deadly epidemic of the prison. At that season, as every one knows, the snow and ice are piled to a fearful depth on the Alps; and daily tempests threaten with death the too adventurous traveler who would cross their summits. It was at this season that these poor captives, emaciated with sickness, weakened by hunger, and shivering from insufficient clothing, were commanded to rise up and cross the snowy hills. They began their journey on the afternoon of that very day on which the order arrived; for their enemies would permit no delay. One hundred and fifty of them died on their first march. At night they halted at the foot of the Mont Cents. Next morning, when they surveyed the Alps they saw evident signs of a gathering tempest, and they besought the officer in charge to permit them, for the sake of their sick and aged, to remain where they were until the

storm had spent its rage. With heart harder than the rocks they were to traverse, the officer ordered them to resume their journey. That troop of emaciated beings began the ascent, and were soon struggling with the blinding drifts and fearful whirlwinds of the mountain. Eighty-six of their number, succumbing to the tempest, dropped by the way. Where they lay down, there they died. No relative or friend was permitted to remain behind to watch their last moments or tender them needed succor. That ever-thinning procession moved on and on over the white hills, leaving it to the falling 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 horror-stricken traveler.

Strewed along the track were the now unshrouded corpses of these poor exiles, the dead child lying fast locked in the arms of the dead mother. But why should we prolong this harrowing tale? The first company of these miserable exiles arrived at Geneva on Christmas Day, 1686, having spent about three weeks on the journey. They were followed by small parties, who crossed the Alps one after the other, being let out of prison at different times. It was not until the end of February, 1687, that the last band of these emigrants reached the hospitable gates of Geneva. But in what a plight! way-worn, sick, emaciated, and faint through hunger. Of some the tongue was swollen in their mouth, and they were unable to speak; of others the arms were bitten with the frost, so that they could not stretch them out to accept the charity offered to them; and some there were who dropped down and expired on the very threshold of the city, "finding," as one has said, "the end of their life at the beginning of their liberty." Most hospitable was the reception given them by the city of Calvin. A deputation of the principal citizens of Geneva, headed by the patriarch Gianavello, who still lived, went out to meet them on the frontier, and taking them to their homes, they vied with each other which should show them the greatest kindness. Generous city! If he who shall give a cup of cold water to a disciple shall in nowise lose his reward, how much more shalt thou be requited for this thy kindness to the suffering and sorrowing exiles of the Savior!

We have seen nearly 3,000 Waldensian exiles enter the gates of Geneva, the feeble remnant of a population of from 14,000 to 16,000. One city could not contain them all, and arrangements were made for distributing the expatriated Vaudois among the Reformed cantons. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes had a little before thrown thousands of French Protestants upon the hospitality of the Swiss; and now the arrival of the Waldensian refugees brought with it yet heavier demands on the public and private charity of the cantons. But the response of Protestant Helvetia was equally cordial in the case of the last comers as in that of the first, and perhaps even more so, seeing their destitution was greater. Nor were the Vaudois ungrateful. "Next to God, whose tender mercies have preserved us from being entirely consumed," said they to their kind benefactors, "we are indebted to you alone for life and liberty."

Several of the German princes opened their States to these exiles; but the influence of their great enemy, Louis XIV, was then too powerful in these parts to permit of their residence being altogether an agreeable one. Constantly watched by his emissaries, and their patrons tampered with, they were moved about from place to place. The question of their permanent settlement in the future was beginning to be anxiously discussed. The

project of carrying them across the sea in the ships of Holland, and planting them at the Cape, was even talked of. The idea of being separated forever from their native land, dearer in exile than when they dwelt in it, gave them intolerable anguish. Was it not possible to reassemble their scattered colonies, and marching back to their Valleys, rekindle their ancient lamp in them? This was the question which, after three years of exile, the Vaudois began to put to themselves. As they wandered by the banks of the Rhine, or traversed the German plains, they feasted their imaginations on their far-off homes. The chestnuts shading their former abodes, the vine bending gracefully over their portal, and the meadow in front, which the crystal torrent kept perpetually bright, and whose murmur sweetly blended with the evening psalm, all rose before their eyes. They never knelt to pray but it was with their faces turned toward their grand mountains, where slept their martyred fathers.

Attempts had been made by the Duke of Savoy to people their territory by settling in it a mongrel race, partly Irish and partly Piedmontese; but the land knew not the strangers, and refused to yield its strength to them. The Vaudois had sent spies to examine its condition; its fields lay untilled, its vines unpruned, nor had its ruins been raised up; it was almost as desolate as on the day when its sons had been driven out of it. It seemed to them that the land was waiting their return.

At length the yearning of their heart could no longer be repressed. The march back to their Valleys is one of the most wonderful exploits ever performed by any people. It is famous in history by the name of "La Rentree Glorieuse." The parallel event which will recur to the mind of the scholar is, of course, the retreat of "the ten thousand Greeks." The patriotism and bravery of both will be admitted, but a candid comparison will, we think, incline one to assign the palm of heroism to the return of "the eight hundred."

The day fixed on for beginning their expedition was the 10th of June, 1688. Quitting their various cantonments in Switzerland, and traveling by by-roads, they traversed the country by night, and assembled at Bex, a small town in the southern extremity of the territory of Bern. Their secret march was soon known to the senates of Zurich, Bern, and Geneva; and, foreseeing that the departure of the exiles would compromise them with the Popish powers, their Excellencies took measures to prevent it. A bark laden with arms for their use was seized on the Lake of Geneva. The inhabitants of the Vallais, in concert with the Savoyards, at the first alarm seized the Bridge of St. Maurice, the key of the Rhone Valley, and stopped the expedition. Thus were they, for the time, compelled to abandon their project.

To extinguish all hopes of their return to the Valleys, they were anew distributed over Germany. But scarcely had this second dispersion been effected, when war broke out; the French troops overran the Palatinate, and the Vaudois settled there, dreading, not without reason, the soldiers of Louis XIV, retired before them, and retook the road to Switzerland. The Protestant cantons, pitying these poor exiles, tossed from country to country by political storms, settled them once more in their former allotments. Meanwhile, the scenes were shifting rapidly around the expatriated Vaudois, and with eyes uplifted they waited the issue. They saw their protector, William of Orange, mount

the throne of England. They saw their powerful enemy, Louis XIV, attacked at once by the emperor and humiliated by the Dutch. They saw their own Prince Victor Amadeus withdraw his soldiers from Savoy, seeing that he needed them to defend Piedmont. It seemed to them that an invisible Hand was opening their path back to their own land. Encouraged by these tokens, they began to arrange a second time for their departure.

The place of appointed rendezvous was a wood on the northern shore of the Leman, near the town of Noyon. For days before they continued to converge, in scattered bands, and by stealthy marches, on the selected point. On the decisive evening, the 16th of August, 1689, a general muster took place under cover of the friendly wood of Prangins. Having by solemn prayer commended their enterprise to God, they embarked on the lake, and crossed by star-light. Their means of transport would have been deficient but for a circumstance which threatened at first to obstruct their expedition, but which, in the issue, greatly facilitated it. Curiosity had drawn numbers to this part of the lake, and the boats that brought hither the sightseers furnished more amply the means of escape to the Vaudois.

At this crisis, as on so many previous ones, a distinguished man arose to lead them. Henri Arnaud, whom we see at the head of the 800 fighting men who are setting out for their native possessions, had at first discharged the office of pastor, but the troubles of his nation compelling him to leave the Valleys, he had served in the armies of the Prince of Orange. Of decided piety, ardent patriotism, and of great decision and courage, he represented a beautiful instance of the union of the pastoral and the military character. It is hard to say whether his soldiers listened more reverentially to the exhortations he at times delivered to them from the pulpit, or to the orders he gave them on the field of battle.

Arriving on the southern shore of the lake, these 800 Vaudois bent their knees in prayer, and then began their march through a country covered with foes. Before them rose the great snow-clad mountains over which they were to fight their way. Arnaud arranged his little host into three companies—an advanced-guard, a center, and a rear-guard. Seizing some of the chief men as hostages, they traversed the Valley of the Arve to Sallenches, and emerged from its dangerous passes just as the men of the latter place had completed their preparations for resisting them.

Occasional skirmishes awaited them, but mostly their march was unopposed, for the terror of God had fallen upon the inhabitants of Savoy. Holding on their way they climbed the Haut Luce Alp, and next that of Bon Homme, the neighboring Alp to Mont Blanc; sinking sometimes to their middle in snow. Steep precipices and treacherous glaciers subjected them to both toil and danger. They were wet through with the rain, which at times fell in torrents. Their provisions were growing scanty, but their supply was recruited by the shepherds of the mountains, who brought them bread and cheese, while their huts served them at night. They renewed their hostages at every stage; sometimes they "caged"—to use their own phrase—a Capuchin monk, and at other times an influential landlord, but all were treated with uniform kindness.

Having crossed the Bon Homme, which divides the basin of the Arve from that of the Isere, they descended, on Wednesday, the fifth day of their march, into the valley of the latter stream. They had looked forward to this stage of their journey with great misgivings, for the numerous population of the Val Isere was known to be well armed, and decidedly hostile, and might be expected to oppose their march, but the enemy was "still as a stone" until the people had passed over. They next traversed Mont Iseran, and the yet more formidable Mont Cenis, and finally descended into the Valley of the Dora. It was here, on Saturday, the 24th of August, that they encountered for the first time a considerable body of regular troops.

As they traversed the valley they were met by a peasant, of whom they inquired whether they could have provisions by paying for them. "Come on this way," said the man, in a tone that had slight touch of triumph in it, "you will find all that you want; 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 stream of the Dora, and before they were aware they found themselves in presence of the French army, whose camp-fires— for night had fallen—illuminated far and wide the opposite slope. Retreat was impossible. The French were 2,500 strong, flanked by the garrison of Exiles, and supported by a miscellaneous crowd of armed followers.

Under favor of the darkness, they advanced to the bridge which crossed the Dora, on the opposite bank of which the French were encamped. To the challenge, "Who goes there?" the Vaudois answered, "Friends." The instant reply shouted out was "Kill, kill!" followed by a tremendous fire, which was kept up for a quarter of an hour. It did no harm, however, for Arnaud had bidden his soldiers lie flat on their faces, and permit the deadly shower to pass over them. But now a division of the French appeared in their rear, thus placing them between two fires. Some one in the Vaudois army, seeing that all must be risked, shouted out, "Courage! the bridge is won!" At these words the Vaudois started to their feet, rushed across the bridge sword in hand, and clearing it, they threw themselves with the impetuosity of a whirlwind upon the enemy's entrenchments.

Confounded by the suddenness of the attack, the French could only use the butt-ends of their muskets to parry the blows. The fighting lasted two hours, and ended in the total rout of the French. Their leader, the Marquis de Larrey, after a fruitless attempt to rally his soldiers, fled wounded to Briancon, exclaiming, "Is it possible that I have lost the battle and my honor?"

Soon thereafter the moon rose and showed the field of battle to the victors. On it, stretched out in death, lay 600 French soldiers, besides officers; and strewn promiscuously with the fallen, all over the field, were arms, military stores, and provisions. Thus had been suddenly opened an armory and magazines to men who stood much in need both of weapons and of food. Having amply replenished themselves, they collected what they could not carry away into a heap, and set fire to it. The loud and multifarious noises formed by the explosions of the gunpowder, the sounding of the trumpets, and the shouting of the captains, who, throwing their caps in the air, exclaimed, "Thanks be to the Lord of hosts who hath given us the victory," echoed like the thunder

of heaven, and reverberating from hill to hill, formed a most extraordinary and exciting scene, and one that is seldom witnessed amid these usually quiet mountains. This great victory cost the Waldenses only fifteen killed and twelve wounded.

Their fatigue was great, but they feared to halt on the battlefield. Rousing those who had already sunk into sleep, they commenced climbing the lofty Mont Sci. The day was breaking as they gained the summit. It was Sunday, and Henri Arnaud, halting until all should assemble, pointed out to them, just as they were becoming visible in the morning light, the mountain-tops of their own land. Welcome sight to their longing eyes! Bathed in the radiance of the rising sun, it seemed to them, as one snowy peak began to burn after another, that the mountains were kindling into joy at the return of their long-absent sons. This army of soldiers resolved itself into a congregation of worshippers, and the summit of Mont Sci became their church. Kneeling on the mountaintop, the battlefield below them, 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, they humbled themselves before the Eternal, confessing their sins, and giving thanks for their many deliverances. Seldom has worship more sincere or more rapt been offered than that which this day ascended from this congregation of warrior-worshippers gathered under the dome-like vault that rose over them.

Refreshed by the devotions of the Sunday, and exhilarated by the victory of the day before, the heroic band now rushed down to take possession of their inheritance, from which the single Valley of Clusone only parted them. It was three years and a half since they had crossed the Alps, a crowd of exiles, worn to skeletons by sickness and confinement, and now they were returning a marshaled host, victorious over the army of France, and ready to encounter that of Piedmont. They traversed the Clusone, a plain of about two miles in width, watered by the broad, clear, blue-tinted Gelmagnasca, and bounded by hills, which offer to the eye a succession of terraces, clothed with the richest vines, mingled with the chestnut and the appletree. They entered the narrow defile of Pis, where a detachment of Piedmontese soldiers had been posted to guard the pass, but who took flight at the approach of the Vaudois, thus opening to them the gate of one of the grandest of their Valleys, San Martino. On the twelfth day after setting out from the shores of the Lemane they crossed the frontier, and stood once more within the limits of their inheritance. When they mustered at Balsiglia, the first Vaudois village which they entered, in the western extremity of San Martino, they found that fatigue, desertion, and battle had reduced their numbers from 800 to 700.

Their first Sunday after their return was passed at the village of Prali. Of all their sanctuaries the church of Prali alone remained standing; of the others only the ruins were to be seen. They resolved to recommence this day their ancient and scriptural worship. Purging the church of its Popish ornaments, one half of the little army, laying down their arms at the door, entered the edifice, while the other half stood without, the church being too small to contain them all. Henri Arnaud, the soldier-pastor, mounting a table which was placed in the porch, preached to them. They began their worship by chanting the 74th Psalm—"O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?" etc. The preacher then took as his text the 129th

Psalm—"Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say." The wonderful history of his people behind him, so to speak, and the reconquest of their land before him, we can imagine how thrilling every word of his discourse must have been, and how it must have called up the glorious achievements of their fathers, provoking the generous emulation of their sons. The worship was closed by these 700 warriors chanting in magnificent chorus the psalm from which their leader had preached. So passed their first Sunday in their land.

To many it seemed significant that here the returned exiles should spend their first Sunday, and resume their sanctuary services. They remembered how this same village of Prali had been the scene of a horrible outrage at the time of their exodus. The Pastor of Prali, M. Leidet, a singularly pious man, had been discovered by the soldiers as he was praying under a rock, and being dragged forth, he was first tortured and mutilated, and then hanged; his last words being, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." It was surely appropriate, after the silence of three years and a half, during which the rage of the persecutor had forbidden the preaching of the glorious gospel, that its reopening should take place in the pulpit of the martyr Leidet.

The Vaudois had entered the land, but they had not yet got possession of it. They were a mere handful; they would have to face the large and well-appointed army of Piedmont, aided by the French. But their great leader to his courage added faith. The "cloud" which had guided them over the great mountains, with their snows and abysses, would cover their camp, and lead them forth to battle, and bring them in with victory. It was not surely that they might die in the land, that they had been able to make so marvelous a march back to it. Full of these courageous hopes, the "seven hundred" now addressed themselves to their great task.

They began to climb the Col Julten, which separates Prali from the fertile and central valley of the Waldenses, that of Lucerna. As they toiled up and were now near the summit of the pass, the Piedmontese soldiers, who had been stationed there, shouted out, "Come on, ye Barbers; we guard the pass, and there are 3,000 of us!" They did come on. To force the entrenchments and put to flight the garrison was the work of a moment. In the evacuated camp the Vaudois found a store of ammunition and provisions, which to them was a most seasonable booty. Descending rapidly the slopes and precipices of the great mountain, they surprised and took the town of Bobbio, which nestles at its foot. Driving out the Popish inhabitants to whom it had been made over, they took possession of their ancient dwellings, and paused a little while to rest after the march and conflict of the previous days. Here their second Sunday was passed, and public worship again celebrated, the congregation chanting their psalm to the clash of arms. On the day following, repairing to the "Rock of Sibaud," where their fathers had pledged their faith to God and to one another, they renewed on the same sacred spot their ancient oath, swearing with uplifted hands to abide steadfastly in the profession of the gospel, to stand by one another, and never to lay down their arms till they had re-established themselves and their brethren in those valleys.

Their next march was to Villaro, which is situated half-way between Bobbio at the head

and La Torre at the entrance of the valley. This town they stormed and took, driving away the new inhabitants. But here their career of conquest was suddenly checked. The next day a strong reinforcement of regular troops coming up, the Vaudois were under the necessity of abandoning Villaro, and falling back on Bobbio. This patriot army now became 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 warriors. The privations and hardships which they endured were as great as the victories which they won in their daily skirmishes were marvelous. But though always conquering, their ranks were rapidly thinning. What though a hundred of the enemy were slain for one Waldensian who fell? The Piedmontese could recruit their numbers, the Vaudois could not add to theirs. They had now neither ammunition nor provisions, save what they took from their enemies; and, to add to their perplexities, winter was near, which would bury their mountains beneath its snows, and leave them without food or shelter. A council of war was held, and it was ultimately resolved to repair to the Valley oi Martino, and entrench themselves on La Balsiglia.

This brings us to the last heroic stand of the returned exiles. But first let us sketch the natural strength and grandeur of the spot on which that stand was made. The Balsiglia is situated at the western extremity of San Martino, which in point of grandeur yields to few things in the Waldensian Alps. It is some five miles long by about two in width, having as its floor the richest meadow-land; and for walls, mountains superbly hung with terraces, overflowing with flower and fruitage, and ramparted a-top with splintered cliffs and dark peaks. It is closed at the western extremity by the naked face of a perpendicular mountain, down which the Germagnasca is seen to dash in a flood of silver. The meadows and woods that clothe the bosom of the valley are seamed by a broad line of white, formed by the torrent, the bed of which is strewn with so many rocks that it looks a continuous river of foam.

Than the clothing of the mountains that form the bounding walls of this valley nothing could be finer. On the right, as one advances up it, rises a succession of terraced vineyards, finely diversified with corn-fields and massy knolls of rock, which rise crowned with cottages or hamlets, looking out from amid their rich embowerings of chestnut and apple-tree. Above this fruit-bearing zone are the grassy uplands, the resort of herdsmen, which in their turn give place to the rocky ridges that rise off to the higher summits, which recede into the clouds.

On the left the mountain-wall is more steep, but equally rich in its clothing. Swathing its foot is a carpeting of delicious sword. Trees, vast of girth, part, with their over-arching branches, the bright sunlight. Higher up are fields of maize and forests of chestnut; and higher still is seen the rock-loving birch, with its silvery stem and graceful tresses. Along the splintered rocks a-top runs a bristling line of firs, forming a mighty chevaux-de-frise.

Toward the head of the valley, near the vast perpendicular cliff already mentioned, which shuts it in on the west, is seen a glorious assemblage of mountains. One mighty cone uplifts itself above and behind another mighty cone, till the last and highest buries its top

in the rolling masses of cloud, which are seen usually hanging like a canopy above this part of the valley. These noble aiguilles, four in number, rise feathery with firs, and remind one of the fretted pinnacles of some colossal cathedral. This is La Balsiglia. It was on the terraces of this mountain that Henri Arnaud, with his patriot-warriors, pitched his camp, amid the dark tempests of winter, and the yet darker tempests of a furious and armed bigotry. The Balsiglia shoots its gigantic pyramids heavenward, as if proudly conscious of having once been the resting-place of the Vaudois ark. It is no castle of man's erecting; it had for its builder the Almighty Architect himself.

It only remains in order to complete this picture of a spot so famous in the wars for the Biblical Protestant faith, to say that behind the Balsiglia on the west rises the lofty Col du Pis. It is rare that this mountain permits to the spectator a view of his full stature, for his dark sides run up and bury themselves in the clouds. Face to face with the Col du Pis, stands on the other side of the valley, the yet loftier Mont Guinevert, with, most commonly, a veil of cloud around him, as if he too were unwilling to permit to the eye of visitor a sight of his stately proportions. Thus do these two Alps, like twin giants, guard this famous valley.

It was on the lower terrace of this pyramidal mountain, the Balsiglia, that Henri Arnaud — his army now, alas! reduced to 400 — sat down. Viewed from the level of the valley, the peak seems to terminate in a point, but on ascending, the top expands into a level grassy plateau. Steep and smooth as escarped fortress, it is unscalable on every side save that on which a stream rushes past from the mountains. The skill of Arnaud enabled him to add to the natural strength of the Vaudois position, the defenses of art. They enclosed themselves within earthen walls and ditches; they erected covered ways; they dug out some four-score cellars in the rock, to hold provisions, and they built huts as temporary barracks. Three springs that gushed out of the rock supplied them with water. They constructed similar entrenchments on each of the three peaks that rose above them, so that if the first were taken they could ascend to the second, and so on to the fourth. On the loftiest summit of the Balsiglia, which commanded the entire valley, they placed a sentinel, to watch the movements of the enemy.

Only three days elapsed till four battalions of the French army arrived, and enclosed the Balsiglia on every side. On the 29th of October, an assault was made on the Vaudois position, which was repulsed with great slaughter of the enemy, and the loss of not one man to the defenders. The snows of early winter had begun to fall, and the French general thought it best to postpone the task of capturing the Balsiglia till spring. Destroying all the corn which the Vaudois had collected and stored in the villages, he began his retreat from San Martiino, and, taking laconic farewell of the Waldense, he bade them have patience till Easter, when he would again pay them a visit.

All through the winter of 1689-90, the Vaudois remained in their mountain fortress, resting after the marches, battles, and sieges of the previous months, and preparing for the promised return of the French. Where Henri Arnaud had pitched his camp, there had he also raised his altar, and if from that mountain-top was pealed forth the shout of battle, from it ascended also, morning and night, the prayer, and the psalm. Besides the daily

devotions, Henri Arnaud preached two sermons weekly, one on Sunday and another on Thursday. At stated times he administered the Lord's Supper. Nor was the commissariat overlooked. Foraging parties brought in wine, chestnuts, apples, and other fruits, which the autumn, now far advanced, had fully ripened. A strong detachment made an incursion into the French valleys of Pragelas and Queyras, and returned with salt, butter, some hundred head of sheep, and a few oxen. The enemy, before departing, had destroyed their stock of grain, and as the fields were long since reaped, they despaired of being able to repair their loss. And yet bread to last them all the winter through had been provided, in a way so marvelous as to convince them that He who feeds the fowls of the air was caring for them. Ample magazines of grain lay all around their encampment, although unknown as yet to them. The snow that year began to fall earlier than usual, and it covered up the ripened corn, which the Popish inhabitants had not time to cut when the approach of the Vaudois compelled them to flee. From this unexpected store-house the garrison drew as they had need. Little did the Popish Peasantry, when they sowed the seed in spring, dream that Vaudois hands would reap the harvest.

Corn had been provided for them, and, to Vaudois eyes, provided almost as miraculously as was the manna for the Israelites, but where were they to find the means of grinding it into meal? At almost the foot of the Balsiglia, on the stream of the Germagnasca, is a little mill. The owner, M. Tron-Poulat, three years before, when going forth into exile with his brethren, threw the mill-stone into the river; "for," said he, "it may yet be needed." It was needed now, and search being made for it, it was discovered, drawn out of the stream, and the mill set a-working. There was another and more distant mill at the entrance of the valley, to which the garrison had recourse when the immediate precincts of the Balsiglia were occupied by the enemy, and the nearer mill was not available.

With the return of spring, the army of France and Piedmont reappeared. The Balsiglia was now completely invested, the combined force amounting to 22,000 in all — 10,000 French and 12,000 Piedmontese. The troops were commanded by the celebrated De Catinat, lieutenant-general of the armies of France. The "four hundred" Waldenses looked down from their "camp of rock" on the valley beneath them, and saw it glittering with steel by day, and shining with camp-fires by night. Catinat never doubted that a single day's fighting would enable him to capture the place. That the victory, which he looked upon as already won, might be duly celebrated, he ordered four hundred ropes to be sent along with the army, in order to hang at once the four hundred Waldense; and he had commanded the inhabitants of Pinerolo to prepare feux-de-joie to grace his return from the campaign. The headquarters of the French were at Great Passet—so called in contradistinction to Little Passet, situated a mile lower in the valley. Great Passet counts some thirty roofs, and is placed on an immense ledge of rock that juts out from the foot of Mont Guinevert, some 800 feet above the stream, and right opposite the Balsiglia. On the flanks of this rocky ledge are still to be seen the ruts worn by the cannon and baggage-wagons of the French army. There can be no doubt that these marks are the memorials of the siege, for no other wheeled vehicles ever were in these mountains.

Having reconnoitred, Catinat ordered the assault (1st May, 1690). Only on that side of Balsiglia, where a stream trickles down from the mountains, and which offers a gradual

slope, instead of a wall of rock as everywhere else, could the attack be made with any chance of success. But this point Henri Arnaud had taken care to fortify with strong palisades. Five hundred picked men, supported by seven thousand musketeers, advanced to storm the fortress. They rushed forward with ardor: they threw themselves upon the palisades; but they found it impossible to tear them down, formed as they were of great trunks, fastened by mighty boulders. Massed behind the defense were the Vaudois, the younger men loading the muskets, and the veterans taking steady aim, while the besiegers were falling in dozens at every volley. The assailants beginning to waver, the Waldensians made a fierce sally, sword in hand, and cut in pieces those whom the musket had spared. Of the five hundred picked soldiers only some score lived to rejoin the main body, which had been spectators from the valley of their total rout. Incredible as it may appear, we are nevertheless assured of it as a fact, that not a Vaudois was killed or wounded: not a bullet had touched one of them. The fireworks which Catinat had been so provident as to bid the men of Pinerolo get ready to celebrate his victory, were not needed that night.

Despairing of reducing the fortress by other means, the French now brought up cannon, and it was not till the 14th of May that all was ready, and that the last and grand assault was made. Across the ravine in which the conflict we have just described took place, an immense knoll juts out, at an equal level with the lower entrenchments of the Waldense. To this rock the cannons were hoisted up to play upon the fortress. Never before had the sound of artillery shaken the rocks of San Martino. It was the morning of Whit-Sunday, and the Waldenses were preparing to celebrate the Lord's Supper, when the first boom from the enemy's battery broke upon their ear. All day the cannonading continued, and its dreadful noises, re-echoed from rock to rock, and rolled upwards to the summits of the Col du Pis and the Mont Guinevert, were still further heightened by the thousands of musketeers who were stationed all round the Balsiglia. When night closed in the ramparts of the Waldenses were in ruins, and it was seen that it would not be possible longer to maintain the defense. What was to be done? The cannonading had ceased for the moment, but assuredly the dawn would see the attack renewed.

Never before had destruction appeared to impend so inevitably over the Vaudois. To remain where they were was certain death, yet whither could they flee? Behind them rose the unscalable precipices of the Col du Pis, and beneath them lay the valley swarming with foes. If they should wait till the morning broke it would be impossible to pass the enemy without being seen; and even now, although it was night, the numerous camp-fires that blazed beneath them made it almost as bright as day. But the hour of their extremity was the time of God's opportunity. Often before it had been seen to be so, but perhaps never so strikingly as now. While they looked this way and that way, but could discover no escape from the net that enclosed them, the mist began to gather on the summits of the mountains around them. They knew the old mantle that was wont to be cast around their fathers in the hour of peril. It crept lower and yet lower on the great mountains. Now it touched the supreme peak of the Balsiglia.

Will it mock their hopes? Will it only touch, but not cover their mountain camp? Again it is in motion; downward roll its white fleecy billows, and now it hangs in sheltering folds

around the war-battered fortress and its handful of heroic defenders. They dared not as yet attempt escape, for still the watch-fires burned brightly in the valley. But it was only for a few minutes longer. The mist kept its downward course, and now all was dark. A Tartarean gloom filled the gorge of San Martino.

At this moment, as the garrison stood mute, pondering whereunto these things would grow, Captain Poulat, a native of these parts, broke silence. He bade them be of good courage, for he knew the paths, and would conduct them past the French and Piedmontese lines, by a track known only to himself. Crawling on their hands and knees, and passing close to the French sentinels, yet hidden from them by the mist, they descended frightful precipices, and made their escape. "He who has not seen such paths," says Arnaud in his *Rentree 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 they had passed in the dark." When the day broke, every eye in the plain below was turned to the Balsiglia. That day the four hundred ropes which Catinat had brought with him were to be put in requisition, and the feux-de-joie so long prepared were to be lighted at Pinerolo. What was their amazement to find the Balsiglia abandoned! The Vaudois had escaped and were gone, and might be seen upon the distant mountains, climbing the snows, far out of the reach of their would-be captors. Well might they sing —

"Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers. The snare is broken, and we are escaped." Psalm 124:7

There followed several days, during which they wandered from hill to hill, or lay hid in woods, suffering great privations, and encountering numerous perils. At last they succeeded in reaching the Pra del Tor. To their amazement and joy, on arriving at this celebrated and hallowed spot, they found deputies from their prince, the Duke of Savoy, waiting them with an overture of peace. The Vaudois were as men that dreamed. An overture of peace! How was this? A coalition, including Germany, Great Britain, Holland, and Spain, had been formed to check the ambition of France, and three days had been given Victor Amadeus to say to which side he would join himself: the Leaguers or Louis XIV. He resolved to break with Louis and take part with the coalition. In this case, to whom could he so well commit the keys of the Alps as to his trusty Vaudois? Hence the overture that met them in the Pra del Tor. Ever ready to rally round the throne of their prince the moment the hand of persecution was withdrawn, the Vaudois closed with the peace offered them. Their towns and lands were restored: their churches were reopened for Protestant worship: their brethren still in prison at Turin were liberated, and the colonists of their countrymen in Germany had passports to return to their homes; and thus, after a dreary interval of three and a half years, the Valleys were again peopled with their ancient race, and resounded with their ancient songs. So closed that famous period of their history, which, in respect of the wonders, we might say the miracles that attended it, we can compare only to the march of the chosen people through the wilderness to the Land of Promise.

With this second planting of the Vaudois in their Valleys, the period of their great overt persecutions may be said to have come to an end, but more subtle dangers awaited them.

Some of these dangers were external. They were still subject to petty oppressions; enemies were never wanting to whisper things to their prejudice; little parties of Jesuits would from time to time appear in their Valleys, the forerunners, as they commonly found them, of some new and hostile edict; they lived in continual apprehension of having the few privileges which had been conceded to them swept away; and on one occasion they were actually threatened with a second expatriation. They knew, moreover, that Rome, the real author of all their calamities and woes, still meditated their extermination, and that she had entered a formal protest against their rehabilitation, and given the duke distinctly to understand that to be the friend of the Vaudois was to be the enemy of the Pope. Nevertheless, their condition was tolerable compared with the frightful tempests which had darkened their sky in previous eras.

The Waldenses had everything to begin anew. Their numbers were thinned; they were bowed down by poverty; but they had vast recuperative power; and their brethren in England and Germany hastened to aid them in reorganizing their Church, and bringing once more into play that whole civil and ecclesiastical economy which the "exile" had so rudely broken in pieces. William III of England incorporated a Vaudois regiment at his own expense, which he placed at the service of the duke, and to this regiment it was mainly owing that the duke was not utterly overwhelmed in his wars with his former ally, Louis XIV. At one point of the campaign, when hard pressed, Victor Amadeus had to sue for the protection of the Vaudois, on almost the very spot where the deputies of Gianavello had sued to him for peace, but had sued in vain.

In 1692 there were twelve churches in the Valleys; but the people were unable to maintain a pastor to each. They were ground down by military imposts. Moreover, a peremptory demand was made upon them for payment of the arrears of taxes which had accrued in respect of their lands during the three years they had been absent, and when to them there was neither seed-time nor harvest. Anything more extortionate could not be imagined. In their extremity, Mary of England, the consort of William III granted them a "Royal Subsidy," to provide pastors and schoolmasters, and this grant was increased with the increased number of parishes, till it reached the annual sum of £550. A collection which was made in Great Britain at a subsequent period (1770) permitted an augmentation of the salaries of the pastors. This latter fund bore the name of the "National Subsidy," to distinguish it from the former, the "Royal Subsidy." The States-General of Holland followed in the wake of the English sovereign, and made collections for salaries to schoolmasters, gratuities to superannuated pastors, and for the founding of a Latin school. Nor must we omit to state that the Protestant cantons of Switzerland appropriated bursaries to students from the Valleys at their academies—one at Basle, five at Lausanne, and two at Geneva.

The policy of the Court of Turin towards the Waldenses changed with the shifting in the great current of European politics. At one unfavorable moment, when the influence of the Vatican was in the ascendant, Henri Arnaud, who had so gloriously led back the Israel of

the Alps to their ancient inheritance, was banished from the Valleys, along with others, his companions in patriotism and virtue, as now in exile. England, through William, sought to draw the hero to her own shore, but Arnaud retired to Schoenberg, where he spent his last years in the humble and most affectionate discharge of the duties of a pastor among his expatriated countrymen, whose steps he guided to the heavenly abodes, as he had done those of their brethren to their earthly land. He died in 1721, at the age of four-score years.

But as the decades passed the spiritual condition of the Vaudois languished. Many imbibed the humanist errors of the age, especially from France. Their sovereignty over their territorial inheritance declined as well, so that Romanists and other heretics could spread falsehoods with impunity within their communities. The greatest enemy of their historic scriptural faith turned out not to be overt persecution, but the spread of humanist views. The writings of Voltaire became prized more than the word of God.

A rising tide of secular humanism would sweep through Italy, as it did elsewhere, infecting many of the few Protestants that yet remained, and changing the position of the Roman Catholic Church on the peninsula.

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CHAPTER 49 : PERSECUTION OF WALDENSIAN PROTESTANTS ON THE ITALIAN PENINSULA

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The on-line resources of Historicism Research Foundation at <http://www.historicism.net/> also proved invaluable for my understanding of Biblical prophecy. Biblical prophecy concerning Christian church history, especially as revealed in the book of Revelation, serves as the foundation upon which all church histories should be based.