

DESERET NEWS.

Truth and Liberty.

NO. 40.

GREAT SALT LAKE CITY, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1858.

VOL. VIII.

[For the Deseret News.]

TRUTH.

A blooming flower in beauty bright—
A dew drop, glistening in the light
May fade, or vanish from the sight,
Nor leave a trace behind.

But truth—eternal—priceless truth—
The brightest gem that's found on Earth,
Though ages roll—yet still in youth
Will shine with light divine.

Ye sons of men, this treasure seek;
And when 'tis found, securely keep;
Not shut your eyes in slumber deep
And shun its sight.

Soon may it spread from pole to pole,
Illuming every honest soul,
Till error from the Earth shall roll
And take its flight.

J. H. MARTINEAU.

A CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF THE VAUDOIS.

WANDERINGS AND MUSINGS IN THE VALLEYS OF THE WALDENSES. BY DR. J. A. WYLIE.

On the 25th of January, 1655, came the famous order of Gastaldo. That decree commanded the whole inhabitants of Luserna, La Torre, Lusernetta, and San Secundo to withdraw and depart within three days, under pain of death and confiscation of goods, from their dwellings, unless they should be able to show, within twenty-one days, that they had abjured their religion, or sold their possessions to the Catholics. Anything more inhuman and barbarous, in the circumstances, than the edict, it would not be easy to imagine.

It was the depth of winter, and of an Alpine winter, which has terrors unknown even to our more northern region. How, ever, could a multitude like this, including young children and old men, the sick and bedridden, the blind and the lame, undertake such a journey across swollen rivers, through valleys buried in snow, and over mountains covered with ice?

They must inevitably perish; and the edict which cast them out was but another form of condemning them to die of cold and hunger on the mountains. As they looked towards the hills, well might they say, "Cold, indeed, are these snow-clad Alps; but colder still is the heart of the persecutor." "Pray ye," said Christ, "that your flight be not in the winter." Who does not admire the compassionate spirit that shines forth in these words?

The agents of Rome, as if desirous of showing that their spirit was as bitter and cruel as that of the Savior was sweet and merciful, chose the very depth of winter for this enforced flight of the Vaudois. An alternative was left them—they might go to mass. Did they avail themselves of this door of escape? The historian Leger informs us that he had a congregation of well-nigh two thousand, and that not a man of them all accepted the alternative of Rome! The whole community rose up as one man, and bearing their aged and sick on their shoulders, and leading by the hand their blind and halt, they bade adieu to their homes; and, traversing the mountains, they were welcomed by their brethren of Angrogna, and Rora, and Bobbio, who joyfully shared with them their own humble and scanty fare—their chestnuts and polenta. Their enemies were amazed when they beheld them rise up and depart.

The cruel edict which cast out the Waldenses from their dwellings in the depth of winter was but the beginning of sorrows. Greater woes trod fast upon the heels of this initial calamity. A portion only of the nation had suffered from the decree of Gastaldo; but the object of the Propaganda was the extirpation of the entire Vaudois race; and the matter was gone about with a consummate perfidy and a most deliberate cruelty.

From the upper valleys, to which they had retired, the Waldenses sent respectful representations to the court of Turin. They described their piteous condition in terms so moving (no words could have exaggerated it), and besought the fulfillment of former treaties, in which the honor and truth of the House of Savoy had been pledged, in language so reasonable and just that one would have thought it was impossible but that they should prevail. Alas, no! The ear of their prince had been poisoned by falsehood; access to him even was denied them. Their supplications, accompanied with groans and tears, were unheeded by the Propaganda. The Vaudois were but charming deaf adders, supplicating lions greedy of their prey and thirsting for Vaudois blood. They were put off by equivocal answers and delusive promises till the arrival of the fatal 17th of April. "I will give you an answer on the 17th," were the last words of Pianezza to their deputies who waited upon him at Turin. The reply, in point of equivocation, was worthy of the old Delphic oracle.

At midnight of the 17th April, 1655, this man of craft and blood secretly departed from Turin, and appeared before the Valleys at the head of an army of 15,000 men. That army was a fit instrument for the work it had been chosen to perform. It was composed, first of all, of Piedmontese, who intensely hated the persons of the Vaudois, and yet more intensely coveted their goods; of two regiments of French, whose appetite had been whetted by a taste of Huguenot blood in their own country, and who came across the Alps, as might a pack of bloodhounds, eager to slake their thirst by voracious draughts in the valleys; and to these were added several companies of Irish, who, banished by Cromwell, arrived in Piedmont dripping from the massacre of forty thousand of their fellow-Protestant subjects.

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

The Waldenses had three alternatives in their choice:—They might go to mass, or they might submit to be butchered like sheep, or they might fight for their lives as men. They chose the latter. Though poorly armed and badly organized, they dared to give battle to Pianezza's powerful and well-equipped host, and for days kept in check his whole army. A series of skirmishes took place along the line of their mountain passes and forts; and in these the Waldenses, though assailed by ten times their number, were completely victorious. The Piedmontese soldiers strove ineffectually to take these positions; they were ignominiously routed, and forced to fall back on their succours in the plain, carrying with them wondrous accounts of Vaudois valor, and infusing incipient panic into the camp. Guilt is ever cowardly. Pianezza began to have misgivings regarding the issue of the campaign, and the recollection of former mighty armies which had perished on these mountains by no means reassured him. He changed his tactics. He now betook him to a weapon with which the Waldenses have ever been less able to cope than with the sword.

Resuming negotiations, he invited the Waldensian deputies to his table, and overpowered them with kindness. He solemnly protested that he had come into their valleys only to track a few fugitives who had dared to violate Gastaldo's order. He assured them that, from him, the Vaudois people had nothing to dread, and that, if only they would permit a few regiments to be quartered among them for a few days, in token of their loyalty, the matter would speedily be at an end. The stratagem prospered to his utmost wishes.

In an evil hour the Waldenses listened to these deceitful words, and opened the passes of their valleys and the doors of their dwellings to Pianezza's soldiers. Janavel alone distrusted the fair words of the marquis. He closed his valley of Rora against the murderers. His brethren blamed him as "too violent." Alas! alas! these poor people were undone. They had received under their roof the executioners of themselves and their families. The first two days, the 22d and 23d of April, passed in peace, the soldiers sitting at the same table, sleeping under the same roof, and conversing freely with their destined victims. This space of time was needed to allow of every precaution and preparation for what was to follow.

The soldiers now occupied all the towns and villages, and cottages; they hung upon the heights; they had seized the passes, especially that of Mirabouc, leading from Luserna into the Valley of Queyras, in Dauphine, to prevent escape into France. At last the blow fell like a thunderbolt.

At four of the clock on the morning of the 24th April the signal was given from the Castle of La Torre. But who shall describe the scenes that followed? On the instant a thousand assassins began the work of death. Dismay, horror, agony, woe, in a moment overspread the Valleys of Luserna and Angrogna. Although hell had vomited forth its fiends to riot in crime and human suffering, they could have done nothing worse. These fiends incarnate, the soldiers of the Propaganda, were not content with dispatching their victims; they strove to immortalize their names by the infliction of new and unheard-of cruelties. There is not a way in which human beings can suffer in which the Vaudois were not made to suffer.

Little children were torn from the arms of their mothers, and dashed against the rocks; or, more horrible still, they were held betwixt two soldiers, who, unmoved by their piteous cries and the sight of their quivering limbs, tore them up into two halves. Their bodies were then thrown on the highways and the fields. Sick persons and old people, men and women, were burned alive in their own houses; some were hacked in pieces; some were bound up in the form of a ball, and precipitated over the rocks, or rolled down the mountains. Of

many of these the end was most miserable. Being caught in their fall by the branch of a tree or the projection of a rock, in places inaccessible, they might be seen hanging for days in lingering pain and agony.

Some were slowly dismembered, and fire applied to the wounds to staunch the bleeding and prolong their sufferings; some were flayed alive; some roasted alive, others were disembowelled; some were horribly and shamefully mutilated, and of others the flesh and brains were boiled and actually eaten by these cannibals. In some instances the tortures inflicted remind us of those of the Neronian era, though, in the main, the Piedmontese barbarities far exceeded the Pagan cruelties. Some were smeared with pitch and used as torches, and some were crucified with their heads downward. Others had the flesh torn from their bones by the iron chains with which they were flogged, and others were beaten to death with burning brands. Some were buried alive; of some the eyes were torn from their heads; of some the nails from their fingers; and of some the tongues from their mouths.

Some were tied to their own orchard trees, and had their hearts cut out; others were fastened down into the furrows of their fields, and ploughed ruthlessly into the soil, as men do manure. Some were stuffed with gunpowder, and blown into pieces; others had cats thrust into their open entrails. Mothers were beaten with the dead bodies of their own infants, and fathers were marched to death with the heads of their sons suspended round their necks. But why should we lengthen out an enumeration so dreadful?

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

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

"They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy;) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth."

These cruelties almost transcend belief; in fact, they form a scene unique in the history of the world. They stand alone in their monstrous forms of fiendish wickedness. There have been scenes in which more blood has been spilt, and more life sacrificed, but none where the actors were so little human. Even after the Sepoy massacres, Leger may still advance his challenge to "all 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 so execrable perfidies and barbarities."

Their authors, presuming, no doubt, that what so far surpassed all former achievements in wickedness would also surpass belief, were so bold as to deny, even before the blood so profusely shed in the valleys was well dry, that these deeds had ever been done.

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

* Histoire Generale des Eglises Evangeliques des Valleys de Piemont ou Vaudoises. Divisee en deux Livres. Par Jean Leger, Pasteur et Modérateur des Eglises des Valleys, et depuis la violence de la persecution, appelle a l'Eglise Wallonne de Leyde. A. Leyde. 1669.

[From the N. Y. Times, Oct. 23.]

South American Expedition of Lieut. Gillis.

HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL OBSERVATION OF THE SOLAR ECLIPSE.—From private letters of the most reliable character we have received information of the complete success of Lieut. Gillis' expedition to South America, to observe the late solar eclipse. In a letter dated Payta, 15th of September, from Lieut. Gillis himself, he complains of much suffering that he was obliged to undergo in crossing the desert and returning to Payta. "The exposure to the sun," he says, "riding over the sand-plains all day, under a nearly vertical sun, drinking water impregnated with nitre and lime, and sleeping on the ground, gave me terrible agues. By powerful doses of quinine I stopped them, but all the day preceding the eclipse I was so racked by fever and headache that I could not sit up an instant until late at night." The following extract from Lieut. Gillis' letter to a friend in this city gives some particulars of his observation:

"We were encamped on a little hill near Olmos, and within the Andes. Raymond mounted the telescope, and got the meteorological instruments ready for his part of the work, and after seeing that all was right, I lay down, in the earnest hope that the morning would prove cloudy, as most of the others had been since our arrival in the country. I feared that I should still be prostrated by sickness, and much preferred clouds to compulsory inactivity under a clear sky. Heaven decreed otherwise. My fever was entirely gone before daylight, and though weak from a three days' fast, I was quite able to act at the telescope, and observe all the phenomena satisfactorily."

The friend who accompanied Lieut. Gillis, and of whose assistance the latter speaks in warm, affectionate terms, gives a more detailed account of the expedition. The following extract, which we are permitted to publish from one of Mr. Raymond's private letters home, will be read with great interest. He writes, under date of Payta, Sept. 15:

"Mr. Gillis and myself left Payta on the 24th of August, for the interior. Our first stopping place was Pinra, the capital of the Province of the same name. To reach it we had to travel over what is called the "Despoblado," or uninhabited district. It extends from the sea, inland, to within a few miles of the Andes, and is the most dreary, desolate place I ever beheld. From Payta to Pinra the distance is about 45 miles, which we traveled in eight hours, not including stoppage at "the half-way house." The sun was intensely hot during the last half of the journey, and it, together with the reflection from the white sand, which is perfectly bare in most places, rendered it very trying to the eyes and face. On arriving at Pinra we were received by Senor Miranda, the head of the house of Ruden & Co., in Payta. Everything was done to make us comfortable.

We stayed at Pinra three days, and left it on the 1st of September for the Cordilleras. Our journey during that day extended as far as the Vicuz, a small town on the borders of the Andes. Twelve hours and a half were consumed in making that 50 miles. The road consisted of a deep heavy sand, through which it was almost impossible to travel. At 11 we halted for two hours, to let the mules rest and to take breakfast, which was made up of ham, crackers and tea. At 6, we arrived at the "posada," or halting place, in Vicuz. As the houses were all very dirty, and were crowded with dirty Indians, we decided to spread the tent in a neighboring field.

We commenced our second day's journey at 5 a.m., leaving Vicuz for a hacienda among the mountains, called Tortalitots. At Payta, Dr. Ringgold had lent Mr. Gillis an American saddle, as those of the country were very narrow and uncomfortable. This saddle hurt the mule's back, and caused delay. On this day, (Sept. 2) Mr. Gillis caught fever and ague, brought on by the heat, which was intense, and by the severity of the ride. When we arrived at Tortalitots he was completely prostrated, and I feared he would have to stay there some days. In the morning, however, he was able to resume the tramp, and leaving our resting-place at 4 a.m., we traversed a very steep and picturesque pass of the Andes, and arrived at Naupe, a hacienda on the road. Here the mules obtained water, for the first time during 30 hours, and we got a very good breakfast. At all the houses on the road we were treated with the greatest hospitality and kindness, and to the question, "What is there to pay?" the answer was always "Nothing." The only way the people can be requited is by giving the dollar to one of the children. In the afternoon we started for Olmos, distant 40 miles. We rode till 10 o'clock that night, and then spread our tents; up the next morning at 4 and arrived at Olmos about 10 o'clock.

In Olmos we had the school-house assigned to us for sleeping quarters. Here, in the afternoon, Mr. Gillis had a very severe chill and a fierce fever, but what with my tending and last doses of quinine it was his last chill. As he