

*Trainer of missionaries who spread the Protestant Faith*

# THE LIFE OF WILLIAM FAREL

The History of God's Beloved Servant

*The Holy Ghost united them to  
the Saviour, to be one with Him  
for ever—members of His body, even  
as before the world was made they  
were set apart in the counsels of*

*'I adore Thee, Lord Jesus Christ,  
and I bless Thee, that by Thy holy  
Cross Thou hast redeemed the  
world. I pray to Thee, Lord, that  
Thou wilt pardon my sins.'*

*Let us follow neither our  
judgy reason, nor anything that is  
in ourselves, for the flesh is not  
changed, and we are not perfect.  
Let us look at the holy, pure,*

*not for the love of us, nor of  
our doings, our deservings,  
and our righteousness*



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*The Life of William Farel*

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## *Preface*

**T**HE following history of God's beloved servant, is meant to be nothing more than a simple story, suited for those who have not the time or the means to study larger and more learned histories.

Those who have read the "Life and Times of Calvin," by Merle d'Aubigne, will easily perceive that many parts of the story have been taken, almost verbatim, from that most interesting history. Sometimes, however, especially in the early part of Farel's life, it has been found necessary to give an account of some important matters which differs from the account given in former histories. The account of the date and means of Farel's conversion may be given as an example of this.

I believe, however, that anyone who will take the trouble to verify the facts of the story by reference to the invaluable book, "The Correspondence of the Reformers," edited by M. Herminjard, of Lausanne, will be convinced that the alterations now made were needful. To the indefatigable researches of M. Herminjard I have therefore been much indebted, and also to his kind personal help in many details.

To Farel's own writings (now out of print), and to other contemporary books, constant reference has been made, the object being to give as far as possible a really accurate account of the great work which the God of all grace did by means of His servant in those dark days.

We see, in reading this history, how unvarying is the testimony given by God the Holy Ghost in all ages and countries; and for this reason the story of Farel's faithful witness to the Lord he loved, and the story also of the hatred and opposition of the enemy, form but a part of the same history in which we are now actors, either on the side of God or of Satan. It is not the war of Protestantism with Popery, but the conflict between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial, which is of real importance to our souls. We may be Protestants, yet in the ranks of Satan. And had Farel been no more than an opposer of popes and priests, his history might heap no further responsibility upon us. As it is, it is a call from the great Captain of our salvation to the consciences of all who read it—a call to follow Him, as His servant William Farel rejoiced in doing, in the face of hatred and enmity, of contempt and reproach, from whatever quarter they may come. May those who read it learn to value as never before, the reproach of Christ.

# Chapter 1

## TWO--PICTURES

**B**EFORE I tell you the story of the servant of God, whose name you see at the beginning of this chapter, I would like to show you two pictures, that you may better understand what was the need for the work which God gave His servant to do. In order to do God's work rightly, it is necessary that he who does it should not only be diligent, but that he should know what the work is which God requires to be done. This wisdom comes from God only. Our natural reason will not help us in the matter. That which we think the right thing may be just the wrong thing. Moses might, for example, have reasoned thus, when in Egypt: "I am here amongst heathen people, having a knowledge of God which they have not. I am in a position of great influence. What can I do better than devote myself to the great work of making God known amongst the idolaters of Egypt?" How many of God's people might have been fully convinced that no greater and better work could be done than this. But God had another work for Moses, which was, in the eyes of man, perfectly useless and foolish.

It was a blessed thing for Moses that he understood this. Let us who believe in God look to Him for direction. Let us say, "Lord, what would'st Thou have me to do?" And till we have the Lord's direction as to our work, let us wait upon Him, rather than bestir ourselves in that which we call service, but which may really be for our own satisfaction, and to the dissatisfaction of God. Moses waited forty years in the land of Midian before God put the work into his hands; and when the right time came, God called him forth. "My time is not yet come, but your time is always ready," were the words of reproof the Lord Jesus spoke to His unbelieving brethren. When God gives work, He gives the right work, and at the right time.

Let us look now at the two pictures. The first is that of an upper chamber in the old city of Troas. The time, a spring day about sixty years after the birth of the Lord Jesus. There is nothing remarkable in this upper chamber, save a table, and upon it a cake of bread and a cup of wine. There are seats, and lamps ready to be lighted when needed. Some men and women come in and sit down. If you ask them what they are come for, they will tell you, "We come together on the first day of the week to break bread." If you say, "Why do you do so?" they reply, "Because the Lord Jesus told us to do this in remembrance of Him, and that we were thus to show forth His death till He come." You see them break the bread and eat it together, and drink the wine. They sing, perhaps, a hymn. One or more pray. Another says a few words about the Lord. The women keep silence. At last a man stands up to preach. If you ask who it is, they will tell you it is Paul, the tentmaker. He preaches to them a long time. Afterwards he talks to them, and they are so much interested that they stay there all night listening. What does he tell them? We know what it was he spoke about in his preaching there and elsewhere. He spoke of Christ—always of Christ He told how Christ had

died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He would prove this to them, and read to them what God, in the Old Testament, had said about it. He told them how Christ was buried, and how He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. He told them how Christ was now up in heaven, in the bright glory of God, and how he, Paul, had seen Him there, and heard His voice. He told them Christ would come again, and take up His people from the earth, first raising those who had died, then changing the bodies of those who were living, so that all together, in glorified bodies, should be caught up to meet Him in the air. He told them that Christ would come again after that, and His saints with Him; that He and His saints would judge the world, and judge angels, and that Christ should reign till He had put all enemies under His feet, and that those who have suffered with Him here shall reign with Him then. He told them that through this Man Christ Jesus is preached forgiveness of sins, full and perfect forgiveness, so that all who believe in Him are justified from all things. Justified freely by God's grace, justified by Christ's blood, justified before they had done one good work, and as soon as they believed in God and in what He has said about His Son. He told them that God had loved them even when they were dead in trespasses and sin; had loved them with such a great love that He not only sent His own Son to bear their punishment, whilst they were still His enemies, but that He had given to them, as soon as they believed, the same life that is in Christ—the same life with which Christ came out of the grave. More than this; having given them this life, He had then joined them by the Holy Ghost to Christ in glory—that Christ in heaven is the Head, and all those thus joined to Him the Church in which God the Spirit dwells. That they were thus already one with Christ, already fit for heaven, and that nothing in heaven, or earth, or hell could separate them from His love. That if they

died they would go to be with the Lord, and, whether they died or lived, they should have, when He came, glorious bodies like His and that, whilst God left them down, here, it was that they might shew forth the praises of Him who had called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. And, alas! he had something more to tell them. He said that in the last days perilous times should come—that after he was gone grievous wolves should enter in—that from amongst themselves men should arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them—that the time should come when men would not endure sound doctrine, but would heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts—would turn away from the truth and listen to fables. Therefore they were to watch, and to remember this solemn warning.

Let us now look at the other picture. We will pass over fourteen hundred years, and we will travel westward, and look in at a great and costly building in an European town. You see high pillars, and grand and beautiful arches, and vaulted roofs, and coloured windows. You see the smoke of incense, making the great building look still more dim and solemn. You see at the top of some steps, here and there, a high table, laden with coloured trappings, and gaudy ornaments, flowers in jars, tall candles which are lighted though it is day. You see images of gold and of silver, of wood and of stone, on the tables, and on every side of you. You see men in bright red, or green, or purple clothes, adorned with gold, and lace, and jewels. These men stand here and there before the altars. They chant in a strange tongue, so you do not know what they are saying. They hold up a golden box, and the men and women all around you fall down and worship, but you do not know what it is they are worshipping. If you asked them, they would tell you that it is Christ, and that He is in the golden box which the man is



holding up. Could you look into the box, you would see there a small flat cake. The man in red and gold would tell you this was once a cake, but that he had the power to change it into Christ Himself, and that he had done so. Therefore this thing which looks like a cake, is to be worshipped and adored, for it is God. You might see in the prayer-book of that man who kneels before it “the Prayer to the Host.”

The host is the cake of which I have been speaking. The words of the prayer are these:

“I adore Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, and I bless Thee, that by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world. I pray to Thee, Lord, that Thou wilt pardon my sins.” The man turns back the pages to the beginning of the book, and he goes to kneel before an image of an old man, carved in stone. Could you look in his book, you would see why he does this. The words on the first page are these, “Whosoever says this prayer, following, before the image of St. Gregory with five paternosters, and five Ave Marias, shall gain for each time forty-six thousand years of pardon. And this pardon is granted by the Pope Paul.”

Whilst the man repeats these prayers you can look around you. You see before one of the high tables there is a large crowd, much larger than before the other tables. Why so? Because there is the place where Mary, the mother of Jesus, is worshipped. Her image stands there. They call it “the Altar of Our Lady” Listen to the prayer of that poor woman. “O Virgin, most holy, most certain hope of all those who hope in thee, receive my soul when it departs out of my body. I salute thee, sister of the angels, teacher of the apostles. I salute thee, strength of the martyrs. I beseech thee to help me in all my tribulations. Thou art the pathway of the erring, the salvation of those who hope in thee. O my Lady, in thee have I put my trust; deliver me,

O my Lady. Save me, O Mary, fountain of mercy! Let thy mercy take away the multitude of our sins, and confer upon us an abundance of merits. All the earth doth worship thee, O Lady! To thee every angelic creature continually cries, Holy, Holy, Holy, Mary, mother of God! Thou art the gate of Paradise, the refuge of sinners, the Queen of Heaven! Be pleased, O sweet Virgin Mary, to keep us without sin, now and forever! Come unto her, all ye that labour, and are heavy-laden, and she will give you rest!”<sup>1</sup>

But the man who was kneeling before St. Gregory is going out of the Cathedral. Follow him, and you will see that he stops, and kneels again in the churchyard. He finds a page in his prayer-book where are written these words:

“The Pope John XXIV grants to any person who says the above prayer in a cemetery as many years of pardon, each time, as there are corpses buried therein. And the Pope Innocent III grants three hundred years for each time that the following prayer is said.”

“The above prayer is a prayer, not to God, but “to the souls of the departed faithful,” telling them how the one who prays desires for them that they may be redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and delivered from torment, and taken to be with the choirs of angels. And further, their prayers are “humbly besought” that the worshipper may be their companion in heaven. The prayer to which Pope Innocent has accorded a reward, is to desire that God will grant pardon of sins to the souls of his departed servants, that “because of these pious prayers they may have the pardon that they continually desire.”

The poor man has done. He walks home calculating the years of pardon he has gained that day. He has repeated each set of prayers six times. In four days therefore he will have gained more than a million years of release from

torment. What does he not owe to the kindness of Pope Paul, Pope John, and Pope Innocent? Does he mean that the punishment of hell will thus be shortened? No! He is not thinking of hell, but of that third place of which his priest has told him, which is neither heaven nor hell, but where “faithful Christian souls go when they die, there to be tormented for long, long ages, in fire, and with other tortures, till they become pure and dean, and fit for the company of the angels. This place the priest calls purgatory, therefore, “the place of purging.”

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*1. Do not think that I am falsely accusing any in writing these awful words. It is always right and fair, in describing the religious belief of those who differ from us, to quote from their own books, and books which they acknowledge as right and sound. I shall therefore quote none but Roman Catholic books as to these matters. The words above are copied partly from a Roman Breviary, printed at Paris, in the year 1493, partly from “ the Psalter of Our Lady,” written by Bonaventura, a man who is now in his turn worshipped by Roman Catholics on account of his “good works,” of which his writing this blasphemous Psalter is a sample.*

## *Chapter 2*

### THE DAYS OF WHICH PAUL SPOKE

**Y**ou have now seen the two pictures. Those who heard the solemn warning of Paul could scarcely have imagined such things as these.

But to this was the little meeting in the upper room at Troas now transformed. For a servant who knew his Master's will, was there not indeed a work to do? A work very sad and sorrowful, but very bright and glorious also, For God who looked in wrath and in hatred upon all these abominations done in His holy name, looked still, in His endless love and patience, with compassion on these poor blinded men and women, and would gather out of them those who should witness for His name a people who should glorify Him as lights shining in this dark Christendom, how dark He alone could know. For I have described to you not one church alone, nor one country alone. Alas! in every country where the name of Christ was named, this, or something as dark and as evil as this, was all that you would find. All, everywhere, unless you were to climb up to some lonely places here and there in the great Alps, where in dens and caves of the earth there were a few persecuted men and women who still

remembered something of that which Paul had taught, and who therefore witnessed here and there for God, and refused to worship any but Himself. And there had been others in various places, who had found their way to some Bible, in spite of the care with which Bibles were kept out of sight and out of mind. These few men and women had learnt to believe that there is one Saviour who has died for sinners, who has offered one sacrifice for sins forever, and is therefore now set down at the right hand of God. But when they had thus confessed the Lord Jesus, they had been burnt alive, they had been slain with the sword, they had been, “persecuted, afflicted, and tormented,” till their witness was silenced, and their names cast out as evil. Some of you who live in London, will remember a large brick building near the Thames, nearly opposite to the Houses of Parliament. It is Lambeth Palace, the old palace where, for hundreds of years, the archbishops of Canterbury have lived when in London. The tall tower, built not very long before the birth of William Farel, is called the Lollard’s Tower. Why so? Because at the bottom of this tower is a gateway, through which the Lollards were brought when found by the spies of the archbishop. They were taken up the long winding stone stairs to the top of the tower. All this you still may see just as it was four hundred years ago and more. You may go up the winding stairs, and you find at the top two small rooms. In one is a fire-place without a chimney; in the other is a trap-door in the floor. Round the walls of the first room are strong iron rings, three or four feet from the ground, fastened firmly into the wooden walls. You see upon the walls, and upon the floor below these rings, fresh as if done yesterday, the black streaks that have been burnt into the wood with red-hot irons; you see the marks of heavy blows upon the walls. You are told that this was the torture-room, and that in “that corner” must have been a “terrible scuffle.”

You are told that there is no chimney, in order that the smoke might stifle the prisoners. You are told that the trap-door opens into a shaft, down which their bodies could be thrown into a drain, and carried away into the Thames. There is yet something more to see in these awful “upper chambers;” there has been Another there, besides the tortured Lollards, and the archbishop and his tormentors. You read upon the wall, cut into the wood, the words of a Lollard prisoner: “Jesus is my love, He is with me now.” Yes, it was for the testimony of Jesus that these Lollards were there murdered, and murdered by the man who took the first place in England, as there set over the “Holy Catholic Church.” He has set his mark, and the Lollards have set theirs, upon the walls of Lambeth Palace. Go into an English Cathedral, perhaps into more than one, you will still see, preserved for five hundred years, a rack used for torture; you will be told that the bishops kept it to rack the Lollards. Go anywhere and everywhere over the countries called Christian, and you will find memorials of those awful days, when darkness covered the earth, and a deluge of wickedness such as “would not be named amongst the heathen,” had overspread town and country, but was deepest and darkest where the priests and monks and nuns were putting on the form of godliness, and taking the name of Christ upon their lips.

The reason given why monks and nuns should live in convents, was, that they might thus find a safe refuge from the wickedness of the world around. But hear the account that is given of their lives, by one whom the Roman Catholics cannot call a liar, for to this day they worship her by the name of St. Teresa; she was a Spanish nun, living at the same time as William Farel. She wrote an account of her life in the convent. She tells us that the condition of a monk or nun is one “of the very greatest danger—yea more, I think it is, for those who will be wicked, a road to hell rather than a help to

their weakness.” She advises parents “to marry their daughters to persons of a much lower degree,” rather than place them in such monasteries as those she had known by her own experience, “unless,” she adds, “the daughters be of extremely good inclinations; and God grant that these inclinations may come to good!” Many of the nuns and monks “are to be pitied, for they wished to withdraw from the world, and thinking to escape from the dangers of it, and that they were going to serve our Lord, have found themselves in ten worlds at once, without knowing what to do or how to help themselves; the friars and the nuns who would really begin to follow their vocation, have reason to fear the members of their communities more than all the devils together.” Such is the witness of the nun Teresa. “But,” you will say, “this also proves that there were people like Teresa who were grieved at the wickedness around them, and wished for something better;” this is true. No doubt there were not a few who were alarmed and shocked at the awful sins which were committed, and committed openly and shamelessly, by the priests in the first place, and afterwards by the people. It would be difficult to live amongst murders, thefts, blasphemies, and vice of every sort, without some sense of the evil, even were one a heathen; and therefore we find those, who, like Teresa, owned it, and would have liked to make things better. But there are two ways of dealing with evil—God’s way and man’s way.

I would ask you to look for a moment at the beginning of the 5th chapter of the gospel of Mark. You there see an example of these two ways. It was very clear to the people of Gadara that there was something terribly wrong about the man with the unclean spirit. They had their own remedy for his case. They had “often bound him with fetters and chains.” And what then? “The chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in

pieces, neither could any man tame him.” And thus did Teresa and others seek to make matters better. They would have convents with stricter rules; they would have harder penances, and vows of greater self-denial; they would have stronger “fettters and chains,” and they had them.

But the devil is not changed since those days at Gadara. It is still true now, as then, “neither could any man tame him.” This is man’s way. Then the blessed Lord Jesus comes in upon the scene. He speaks the word: and what then? “They come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind.” No need now for fettters and chains. No need now for convents and vows. No, let you who know such grace now, go each one and “tell how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.” This is God’s way; and it is a story of this blessed way of compassion, of grace, and of power, that I now have to tell you. It was needful first to tell you something of the darkness and the wickedness.

Something! It would be a terrible thing to know more than something of it, for such depths of awful crime against God and man, as one must needs find in every page of the history of those black ages, are better left with only a glance. We should know something, that we may see what God’s grace has been, and leave the rest till the day when all will have to be manifested before the great white throne of judgment. Let us now turn to the story of William Farel. But stay—even after this long preface I would still add a few words of warning, lest you learn a wrong lesson from the story that is to follow. Do not think that I wish to tell it you in order to show you how ignorant and how wicked Roman Catholics have been and are. No; I wish to tell it you that you may see, in the first place, how ignorant and wicked we all are, till God, in His mercy, saves us. The heart of a Protestant



and the heart of a Roman Catholic are in no way different. “As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.”

Therefore, when you read of these poor men and women in Roman Catholic France, and hear how ignorant they were of God, how they tried to get to heaven, if they thought about it at all, by their own works, or by any number of wrong roads; how they would not hear of the one road which leads to life; how they turned away from the blessed gospel of grace, and hated those who told it to them—when you read all this, do not think, “How bad Roman Catholics are!” but think rather “How bad am I.”

For in these sad histories of Adam’s sinful children, we learn what our own hearts are, and must be, without the grace of God and the light of the Spirit. You may not be as ignorant as these poor people, but if you are still holding back your heart from Christ, it is so much the worse for you that you are less ignorant. It may be many of them will receive but the few stripes, whilst you, if you go out of this world unsaved, will receive the many.

Believe me, or rather believe God, that there is no more love of Christ, no more delight in the gospel, in the natural heart of a Protestant than in the natural heart of a Papist.

Have you never slipped out of the way lest anyone should speak to you about Christ?

Have you never felt displeased that you were taken to hear the gospel preached, rather than left to go to some church or chapel, where you could hear good music, or see beautiful painted windows?

Have you never felt in your heart dislike and contempt for “those people who are always talking about the Bible”?

Have you never sneered at the thought of “being converted”?

I used to do all these things at a time when I had no doubt that I was right and that Roman Catholics were wrong. I did not know that, in the sight of God, I was the greater sinner of the two; for I had a Bible, and I had heard the gospel of Christ. I was refusing and rejecting the living Christ in heaven.

The poor Roman Catholics, most of them, knew no Christ except the images of wood and stone, and the painted pictures which had the name of Christ given to them.

Therefore I would have you to remember, in the first place, that in these histories of man's enmity to God, you read of yourself; you see your own picture, unless God in His mercy has saved you. In the second place, I would have you to remark, in the story that I shall tell you, how wonderful is the love and goodness and patience of God. We feel sometimes quite proud of living in a "land of Bibles," as though this were a merit of ours, and as though God looked upon us with special favour on account of it; but let me remind you, that when God sees you reading your Bible, He sees in that circumstance, not your love to Him, but His love to you. It is because of His great love to you, that you have that Bible in your hand, and "to whom much is given, of him much will be required." And God looked down also in His great love upon those Popish churches of which I have been speaking, upon the idolaters, and the persecutors, upon the lands where Bibles were never seen, and He called out His own sheep from amongst them, and made them to know His voice and to follow Him.

The Jews thought they were better in the sight of God than the heathen, because they had the Bible, and did not worship idols. But see what God says as to that He gives us, in the 1st chapter of Romans, a description of the awful wickedness of the heathen; He gives us in the 2nd chapter, the

reasons why the Jews thought themselves better; He then, in the 3rd chapter, puts these words into the mouth of Paul the Jew. “What then? are we” (the Jews) “better than they?” (the Gentiles). “No, in no wise; they are all under sin; there is none righteous, no, not one.” And He then gives that awful description of the heart of man, which applies alike to those who have Bibles, and those who have none, those who profess a sound belief, and those who are ignorant idolaters. “There is no difference,” He says, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”

And then, in His wonderful love and grace, there follow the blessed words which are for all alike, Jews and heathen, Protestants and Roman Catholics, all who will believe the good news which God has told concerning His Son, “Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” All alike sinners; all alike welcome to the Saviour of the ungodly; all alike lost without Him. You will see therefore, in the story that follows, two things—your badness, and the goodness of God; the dark, evil heart of man, and the loving heart of God—the ruin man has made, the remedy God has found. All shame to man, all glory to God.

## *Chapter 3*

### THE CHILD WITHOUT A BIBLE

**N**ear the town of Gap, in the south-eastern corner of France, there is a little hamlet, half buried in trees, and surrounded with green and flowery meadows. Above it rise the great Alps, with their snow-covered tops and wild precipices. The river Durance rushes down from the mountains and passes near the village. It must be a beautiful place, and, perhaps, but little altered since the time of which I am going to tell you, 400 years ago. At that time there rose above the cottages a house, inhabited by the lord of the manor, a nobleman of the name of Farel. The little village is still called Les Farelles, and the remains of the old house, with its wide terrace and its orchard, are still there, overlooking the village below. The gentleman who lived there at the time of which I am speaking had a wife, five sons, and one daughter. The five boys were called Daniel, John James, Claude, William, and Walter. William, who appears to have been the youngest but one, was born in the year 1489. You may think from the description I have given you, that William's birthplace was a quiet, peaceful little nook, to which trouble and tumult could scarcely find their way; but in

that year (1489) there was anything but peace and quiet in those mountain villages of Dauphiny! I must tell you that for many hundreds of years there had been some poor village people living amongst the Alps, who still held fast, in a great measure, to the word of God, who met together to worship Him in a simple, godly manner, who had none other gods but Him— who refused to worship the bread or the images, which were adored in every country round, and who trusted to the Lord Jesus Christ alone to save them from all their sins. These poor people, who are called the Waldenses, had often been persecuted by the Pope of Rome, and those who belonged to him.

Two years before William Farel was born the Pope, Innocent VIII., sent forth a command that the little remnant of these godly people should be hunted down and destroyed. “To arms!” he said, “and trample these heretics under foot as venomous serpents.”

Thus it was, that in the years 1488 and 1489, the homes of Christ’s little flock were attacked by an army of 18,000 men, headed by the Pope’s legate. The poor people fled, and took refuge in caves and in clefts of the rocks, but were followed by the soldiers from one hiding place to another. Every valley, every wood, was searched, and everywhere were the dead bodies of the saints left to bear witness to the awful wickedness of him who called himself the Vicar of Christ upon earth. All this was going on around the village of Les Farelles when William was born. His parents must have heard and seen many of these things. Do you think they began to doubt whether it was indeed the work of Christ that the Pope’s soldiers were doing? No; they had eyes but saw not, and ears but heard not, and hearts that did not understand. They would have thought anything right which the Pope commanded to be done, because he commanded it, and for no better reason.

In this case, too, they had another, though not a better reason, for thinking it right that the Waldenses should be hunted like wild beasts and murdered without pity. The priests told them that all Waldenses were wizards and witches. They said that they met together by night on the Jews' Sabbath, to worship the devil and commit every kind of wickedness. They said that the way they went to these meetings was by riding through the air on the backs of monsters, or sitting on a broom-stick made of birch wood; that they would thus travel through the air from the most distant places with the speed of lightning; that these prayers offered to the devil by the Waldenses were the cause of bad harvests, and of sickness and distress.

“My parents,” said William, “believed everything.” But for us it is difficult indeed to believe that such ignorance and folly ever existed. Yet there are many people even now who have just such a faith as the Farel. That is to say, they put the word of man in the place of the word of God, and call it faith to believe that which man has invented. There are thousands of people, for example, who still believe that a priest can forgive their sins, and that we need but to be baptized with water by a clergyman in order to be born again. It may appear less foolish to the mind of man, than to believe in witches riding through the air on broom-sticks; but in either case such folly is in the sight of God equally sinful. It is sinful especially in those who have the Bible, and can therefore know better. We may pity the Farel family, for to them the word of God was unknown, and they had but the word of man to guide them. They believed, therefore, but in man, not in God. The Lord Jesus has said, “Have faith in God.” This, and this only, is really faith.

William, too, believed everything. His parents were very careful to teach him to be religious. He learnt to pray to so many saints and angels, that his

mind became, as he tells us, a temple of idols, and that he was like a walking calendar of saints' days and of fast days. He was taught, too, the wonderful histories of these saints—how S. Francis, by friendly conversation, persuaded a wolf in the woods to eat people no more; yet more, how he commanded the wolf to come into the church, and there, in the pulpit, before all the people, give its paw as a sign that it thus promised obedience, and how it was a good wolf ever after. How S. Elizabeth was forbidden by her husband to give away so much bread and meat to the poor, but, being a saint, she continued to do so, and one day, meeting her husband as she went into the town with her cloak full of bread and meat, she told him she had got nothing but flowers; and when her husband looked into her cloak he saw nothing but lilies and roses, for God had changed the bread and meat into flowers, lest her husband should be angry.

Little William, who reasoned about things, must have been puzzled to know whether it was therefore right for wives to disobey their husbands, and whether it could be wrong to tell lies, since the saints set the example. He was told of many other saints' stories without end; how they walked over the sea, preached to the birds and caterpillars, carried their heads about after they were beheaded, killed dragons, and saw visions. How some lived for years on the tops of pillars, others never washed themselves, out of self-denial, others allowed themselves to be eaten by vermin, and others mixed dirt with their food and water. Such was the education of poor little William, as far as we have any means of knowing what his parents taught him.

He learnt to read when he was a very little boy, but he did not learn, alas, to read the Bible. It was a book neither he nor his parents ever beheld. "When I think," he says, "what I myself have been, I am filled with horror,

remembering the worship, the prayers, and the services which I offered up to crosses, and such like things, contrary to the commandment of God. Were it not that Satan had put out my eyes, what I saw and what I did was quite enough to convince me how far I was from die straight path. The first notable piece of idolatry which I remember to have committed, and the first pilgrimage I ever performed was to the holy cross which is on a mountain near Tallard. They told me it was made of the wood of the actual cross upon which Jesus Christ was crucified. It was an ash-coloured wood, quite different from that of the cross which I afterwards kissed and worshipped at Paris, in the place they call ‘the Holy Chapel.’ This, too, was said to be made of Christ’s cross, and so were several other crosses, but yet all were made of different kinds of wood. The cross of which I am telling you was adorned with copper. If the wood was holy, so was the copper, according to the priests, for they said it was made of the basin out of which the Lord washed the apostles’ feet. They told us, too, that, whenever this cross was carried away to another place, it always came back of itself, and that when there was going to be bad weather, it would tremble and shake. This happened specially to a small crucifix which was fastened to the cross, a crucifix so gaudily painted that it seemed to be made in mockery. ‘This little crucifix,’ said the priest, ‘casts forth sparks of fire, and if it did not do so everything upon the earth would be destroyed.’”

The father and mother of little William, who was then about seven years old, listened to all these wonders and firmly believed them. But the little boy seems, notwithstanding, to have had his wits about him in some degree. He showed, too, that he had already that love of reality, and dislike of all false appearances, which we find afterwards so remarkable a part of his character. He tells us that as he and his parents were looking with adoration



at the cross, a young woman came up, who seemed to be only thinking of the priest, and to take no notice of the cross; and the priest, too, seemed delighted to see her, and walked off with her into the chapel hard by, "Just," said William, "as a young man might lead off a young woman to a dance." Even then there seemed to William to be something wrong in the bold manners of the woman; "but," he says, "we were all so blinded, we dared not give way to the thought that there could be anything there that was not good and holy." There was one more sight that had yet to be seen at the foot of the holy cross; this was a man who served as a show, and was called "the priest's sorcerer." He was frightful to behold, his eyes covered with white scales. He stood there to back the priest in all the stories he told about the cross and the crucifix, for the priest said nobody could see the cross tremble, and the crucifix throw out sparks, except himself and the man with white eyes.

The Farel's returned home, glad to have seen the wonderful cross, but little William had many thoughts about it, which he kept to himself. He did not the less believe all that his parents taught him, nor did he venture to think any of the priest's stories could be false, but he felt perplexed and bewildered.

It has been a painful task to tell you this sad history of William's childhood, and it will be a painful task also to tell you of many more things which he had to see and hear. But God desires that we should know these things in order to be warned by them. God wrote the dark, sad histories of Jeroboam, and of Ahab, and of Ahaz, that His people Israel might see what an evil thing and bitter it was to depart from God. The sins of the Jews and the sins of Christendom should serve as warnings to you and to me. I would have you to remark that in both cases the dark and evil days came, because

men turned away from the pure word of God to the inventions of men, and in both cases the pastors and the teachers were the blind leaders of the blind; and into how deep a ditch do we find the leaders and the followers fallen at the time of which I am telling you!

“A wonderful and horrible thing,” said the Lord, speaking of Israel, “is committed in the land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and My people love to have it so.” And of Christendom the Lord foretold by His servant Paul, “The time will come when they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and be turned to fables.” And do not think that the days of danger are over. Do not think that there is no fear for you that you should thus be led by man rather than by God. Satan may look now more like an angel of light, but so much the worse for you, unless you are taught by God to know the voice of the Shepherd, and to distinguish it from the voice of Satan.

In the days of Farel, when Bibles were kept out of sight, Satan could by his servants teach sin and folly, without any need to mix up evil with good to disguise his work. Men did not know in the pitch darkness of those days that the most utter folly was untrue. But now, when you all have Bibles, Satan works in another way. He puts the good and evil together in a book—it may be in a hymn book or a sermon—so skillfully and so smoothly that you will think it good, and beautiful, and wise, and only God can keep you from these traps and snares. Farel in later years wrote these words, which I would have you to remember as long as you live, “I pray all those who love Jesus Christ, who alone is the Truth, that they do not blame me if I refuse to put the most ancient and honoured teachers in the same rank as the Holy Scriptures, and if, when I read their writings, I search diligently in the Scriptures to see whether they have told the truth or not. Far be it from me

to contradict any great and holy teacher who speaks the truth; on the contrary, the smallest and meanest person, if he speaks the truth, ought not to be contradicted upon any account whatsoever. I only ask that the truth they speak should be manifestly proved and maintained by the Holy Scripture and maintained by us, because we find it there; for the Scripture is very sure, and says nothing but that which is true, and which everybody ought to receive and to hold fast; but -every single thing which cannot be proved by Scripture has no weight, no place, no authority in the worship and service of God. Christ is the Truth; He alone is the One who ought to be listened to. We must not turn to look at any other, nor attend to what any man whatever may do and say, but follow Christ, and Christ only. And if we doubt whether anything we are told by men is really what Christ has said and commanded, we are to turn to the Holy Scriptures, which are the fountain-head, from which God intends we should draw forth all truth. We should find out there what Christ really did say, and according to that we should hold fast, believing it and doing it, without adding to it or diminishing from it, nor twisting it this way and that, to right or to left, but simply obeying it.” Well would it be if all people calling themselves Christians had walked by this rule!

## Chapter 4

### HOW GOD MADE USE OF THE TURKS, THE JEWS, AND THE PRINTERS

**B**ut to return to little William in his dark days of ignorance. I am glad to tell you that all his time was not spent in learning the legends of the saints. He was a bold, daring boy— sometimes rash and headstrong; perhaps often so. He got better training for his body than for his mind and soul, for he learnt early to climb the mountains and swim in the rivers. He was strong and hardy. God had given him great bodily activity, which was one day to be very needful to him. He and his brothers could get up to places on the rocks where you would be most likely dashed to pieces. William loved danger, and was afraid of neither men nor beasts, nor wild precipices, nor mountain torrents. His father said he was just the boy to make a first-rate soldier, and for this he meant to educate him. But as William grew up he had plans of his own, which may, perhaps, surprise you: he wished to give up his whole time to study, and to become a learned man, who could write books and have a great name.

I should tell you that just at that time learning had begun to be “the fashion,” as people say; not only amongst the sons of gentlemen, but in

every class, there was a great desire to learn. The people of France and of other countries were beginning to feel how ignorant they were, and to long for knowledge on many subjects. There were, perhaps, three reasons for this. In the first place a great number of learned men had arrived in Italy from Constantinople. It was a little more than thirty years before William Farel was born, that Constantinople was first taken by the Turks, who were, as you know, Mahommedans. The Greeks, who had lived in Constantinople before, were Christians by name, though as dark in their thoughts of Christ as those in France. When the Turks arrived, the Greek scholars, who were, as regards worldly knowledge, far less ignorant than the French and Italians, fled for safety to Italy, bringing with them the books from the great library at Constantinople. These were, alas! chiefly heathen books, written by the old Greek philosophers and poets. They could not, therefore, be of any real profit for the souls of men—quite the contrary; but God makes all things serve His wise and blessed purposes. In order to read these books numbers of people began to learn Greek. We are told that the Greek schools which were opened at Paris were thronged with scholars. Old men, young men, and boys, might be seen as early as three and four in the winter mornings, hurrying through the streets, in one hand an iron candlestick, in the other a huge note-book. God was thus preparing the means by which the New Testament should be read in the original Greek, and translated into the various languages of Europe.

The second reason which may account for the great desire for learning that was then so remarkable, was this. Shortly before the time of which I am telling you, the Arabians, or Moors, who had been for centuries the masters of a great part of Spain, were driven out by the so-called Christians. These Moors, like the Turks, were Mahommedans. They were a people who

possessed a greater knowledge of many sciences than their Christian neighbours. They seem to have learnt a great deal from the Jews, and they encouraged the Jews to live amongst them. The Jews had many old books, called the Cabala, containing a certain amount of curious knowledge. They had also, as you know, the Old Testament in Hebrew. This had been carefully copied by them over and over again, and whilst the Bible was kept from Christians, the Jews had at least that part of it, and were well acquainted with it: that is to say, they had that acquaintance with it which the natural understanding can have. They did not truly understand it, for they were not taught by the Spirit of God.

When the Christians took possession of the Moorish provinces of Spain, they began a terrible persecution of the Jews. Numbers were tortured, burnt alive, and killed in other manners. In the year 1492, 800,000 Jews were banished from Spain. They were thus scattered over Europe, carrying with them their Cabalistic books and their Old Testaments. Their great persecutors were the Dominican monks. 1,000,000 volumes were burnt at Grenada of Moorish and Jewish books. 80,000 of the Jewish manuscripts were also burnt in Spain by Cardinal Ximenes. This perhaps aroused the curiosity of many persons to know what the Jewish books contained. "The Jews alone" wrote Reuchlin, a learned man in Germany who had studied their books, "the Jews alone have known the name of God." Reuchlin's book on this subject was written in 1494.

The priests in vain warned the people that anyone who learnt Hebrew was turned into a Jew on the spot, and that Greek was a newly-invented language of which all good Christian people ought to beware. Numbers now learnt Hebrew as well as Greek. If you can at any time get a most interesting little sixpenny book, called "Thomas Platter," you will there find

how this young man, who lived at the same time as William Farel, and who had been a goat-herd on the Alps, copied out the whole of a Hebrew grammar, and gave his last penny to buy a Hebrew Bible. Thus God was preparing the way for the spread of the Old Testament as well as the New, and also for its translation into many languages. But as books had for many hundred years been copied in writing, whenever wanted, they could never have been spread far and wide, had not God also in His providence prepared the means by which that should be done.

And this brings us to the third reason why learning was now “the fashion,” as Thomas Platter tells us. About the middle of the 15th century printing had been invented. Before the year 1500, 4,000,000 folios had been printed. In the following 36 years 17,000,000 more. In vain did Satan stir up the enemies of God to oppose the first gleams of light which thus dawned upon men. The persecutions in Spain from 1480 to 1498 were unceasing. The Jews suffered terribly, but amongst them others who had begun to read the Bible. In the year 1481, 2000 men and women were burnt by the Spanish Dominicans on one scaffold in the town of Seville.

But the mere spread of Bibles, and the knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, would not alone have been enough for the saving of souls, and for the bringing to light the gospel of God. The Jews who read the Old Testament so diligently remained dark and blind as before. The Bible alone, without the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, is as a sealed book. It is only in living temples, in believing men, that the Holy Ghost dwells, and were there no believing people, the world would be in utter darkness, though filled with Bibles. God was, therefore, not only preparing the means for the spread of Bibles, but he was preparing men who should understand them, and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, should preach the glad tidings they learnt from

the blessed word of God. But as yet the light had not burst forth. The printers were hard at work by day and by night. They slept sometimes only three hours in the twenty-four. But, alas! They were employed so diligently in printing either Latin psalters and Bibles, which few could read, or heathen philosophy and poetry, or Popish missals, such as the one I described to you. And William Farel and the other chosen vessels whom God was preparing for Himself, were still blind and benighted. God alone could say, "Let there be light;" and when the time came the light broke forth.

That time was not yet come. The unbelieving Turks, and the unbelieving Jews, had been doing God's work without intending it. God was training some who should do it out of love to Him, in the power of the Holy Ghost.



## Chapter 5

### HOW WILLIAM WENT TO PARIS

**W**illiam Farel's father was not pleased at his son's desire to study, but William gained his point. He first tried to find someone who could teach him Latin. In this he failed. His teachers proved very ignorant; they were probably the priests who lived in the neighbourhood. As all the services in the churches were in Latin, you might suppose that Latin was just the one thing the priests would know; but it was not so. The country clergy learnt to repeat the words of the mass-books, but it had not been the custom amongst them to learn to understand the language they daily used. We may judge from the description given of the clergy by one of themselves, who lived just at that time, that they were sunk in vice and ignorance. The name of this clergyman was Nicholas de Clemangis.

A bishop in Germany, who also lived in those days, thus described them:—"The modern and unhappy clergy addict themselves to temporal things, being destitute of divine light. They love themselves, neglect the love of God and their neighbour; they are worse than worldly men, whom they destroy, together with themselves. They are addicted to pleasures and

infamous practices. By the lives of such wicked clergymen the people come to be disobedient and irreverent towards the church; they are seduced by blind guides, who — oh, shame! — are ignorant idiots, proud, covetous, hypocritical, luxurious, envious, &c. At banquets, taverns, plays, and theatres, they are more frequently found than in places dedicated to God. The bishops adorn their bodies with gold, while they defile their souls with impurity. They account it a shame to employ themselves with spiritual matters, and their glory is to meddle with those things that are vile; they take by violence other men's goods; they bestow the goods of the church upon their kindred, upon stage-players, flatterers, huntsmen, and wicked persons.”

Amongst such men did poor William seek in vain for a tutor. He was bitterly disappointed. But the discoveries he made amongst them, as to their ignorance of Latin, formed but a small part of his disappointment: it grieved and troubled him yet more, to find that they looked upon the services they chanted, and the forms they used, with utter irreverence, if not contempt. William says he sought everywhere—in monasteries, and out of them—for some priest or monk who seemed to be real and earnest in the religion he professed. “I was searching,” he said afterwards, “for someone who should excel the rest in idolatry, and I was filled with horror at those who worshipped in the popish churches without the deepest reverence.” William, therefore, had two objects in desiring his father to send him to the University of Paris. He might there find amongst the learned priests some who worshipped God and the saints with entire devotion; he would also be able there to learn and study to his heart's content. After much persuasion, his father consented, and William set out on the long journey to Paris.

It was in the year 1509 that William Farel persuaded his father to send him to Paris. He was then 20 years old. The education his parents had given him had, as far as religion was concerned, fully answered the purpose for which they intended it. Whilst most around them were careless and indifferent, William was a strictly religious young man. He tells us, "In truth popery itself was not, and is not, as popish as my heart was. It was not that wickedness or evil, when I knew them to be such, had any charm for me, nor did I take pleasure in those whom I knew to be living in sin. But the devil was to me transformed into an angel of light, and I do not believe that all the devils together could have more completely deceived and enchanted any poor heart than they did mine. The devil had entirely turned me away from God, from the truth, from the right road, from Christian faith and doctrine, so that I had renounced God, I had turned my back upon His chief commandments, I was given over to the service of Satan, and so deeply rooted in it that I could never have delivered myself, for so utterly had Satan blinded my eyes and perverted my soul, that if there was anyone who had the approval of the pope, that person was to me as God. If I heard anyone speak with contempt of the pope, or anything belonging to him, I could have wished that that person should be destroyed, and that all that did not serve to uphold the pope should be demolished."

William must have heard many contemptuous words spoken of the pope around his home at Les Farelles. Ever since he was five years old there had been constant wars between the kings of France and some of the Italian States. The French soldiers were continually passing and repassing the Alps, quite near the town of Gap. The kings themselves had passed near his home, and he must have heard much of what was going on in Italy. Strange tales were brought back by the soldiers about the popes, whom they had

been used to respect as being “God upon earth,” till they went themselves to Rome.

Innocent VIII, who had caused the murder of the Waldenses, had been called away to render up his account to God three years later. His memory was cursed by the people of Rome, because he had neglected the poor, and spent the money of the State upon his family. The French soldiers had, many of them, seen his successor, Alexander VI, the awful history of which wicked man is better left untold; but Farel must have heard the terrible story of his death, which was repeated far and wide.

He had invited some cardinals to a feast, having poisoned some wine or sweetmeats which he meant to give them. His wicked son, who was a cardinal and archbishop, joined with him in this murderous plan. The pope was in want of money, and the wealth of these cardinals would fall into his hands at their death. Murder was nothing new to the pope and his son. Many had been the murders committed in the pope’s palace, the Vatican, by the hands of these two wretched men. But this time the judgment of God fell upon the murderer. The servants, either by mistake, or having been bribed by the cardinals, gave the poison to the pope and his son. That night the pope died, having called for the sacrament as a passport into the presence of God. The cardinal, his son, recovered, after a severe illness, to add to the list of his crimes.

It was this pope, of whose crimes murder formed but a small part, who first declared that he could give full and complete forgiveness of sins. Why did he say so? It was one of his plans for getting money, for the forgiveness of sins was sold to those who would buy it. And all that had the name of the church of God had turned from Him—that spotless One, who gives

complete forgiveness, perfect salvation, without money and without price, to buy their pardon from a criminal whose vices filled Rome with horror.

And now the pope, Julius II., whom William Farel revered as if he were God Himself, what was he? In the words of the Roman Catholic writer from whose book I relate to you these awful histories, he was “a prodigy of vice.” The same writer tells us that he was “abhorred by the Italians as a ferocious monster, warlike, turbulent, bloody, and an enemy of peace.” Did not these things shake the faith of William Farel? No, when he heard of the evil deeds of the popes, he tells us, he would “gnash his teeth like an angry wolf,” that any could so slander the man who was to him as God. Yes, as God; for it was this last pope, Julius II., who proclaimed at the great general council held in Rome, at the Lateran, that to him “all power was given in heaven and in earth!

Well may the writer from whom I have quoted say, “It will be seen that the life of a great number of popes has been such, that it would be insulting the Holy Ghost to pretend that it was by His guidance these monsters of vice were chosen, and placed as heads over the Christian church.” But William Farel was, like you and like me, when in our natural state, without understanding. “There is none that understandeth.” How true is this word of God, and how seldom is it believed! “I thought myself,” he says, “to be a true Christian, just on account of those things which proved me to be further from Jesus Christ, and from the faith of a Christian man, than the heavens are far from the earth. I was so plunged in the mud and mire of popery, so deeply buried in the depths of it, that all that is in heaven and in earth could not have dragged me out, had not the God of Mercy, the tender and loving Saviour, Jesus Christ, drawn me forth in His great grace, by the power of His gospel of salvation. I see and feel, in looking back at my faith

in crosses, pilgrimages, images, dead bones, and other devilish deceits, how deeply I was sunk in the dark pit of iniquity, of idolatry, and of the curse of God. But when I think specially of the idolatry of the mass, it seems to me that legions without number of the devils of hell must have possessed me, and kept me in their power. Otherwise, how could I have been so utterly perverted from all that God has said—from all that the Holy Scripture commands us to believe and to hold! For I believed that what the priest held in his hands—the thing that he put in a box, and shut it up there—that he ate and gave to others to eat—I believed that this was my God—the only true God! And to me there was no other in heaven or in earth. Could I more openly renounce God, and take the devil for my master? Could I more plainly oppose myself to the word of God than in thus giving myself up to a lie, and doing just the contrary to that which God has commanded? Oh, the horror I have of myself, and of my sins, when I think of it! For there can be nothing said, or done, or thought, in hell, more abominable to God than this idolatry, for which, as a true servant of the devil, I was willing to suffer, in body and in soul. O Lord, if only I had served Thee, and honoured Thee, in true and living faith, as Thou didst command, and as Thy faithful servants have done, instead of giving up my heart to idolatry, to bow down before that piece of bread! I ‘honoured and worshipped’ it, thinking that Thou, the good, wise, and true God, wert pleased with such wickedness, such madness, such a blasphemous lie against the truth. I knew not that I was as far from the true faith of a Christian, as that god of paste was far from Thee. And in following the Satanic teaching of the pope, and doing ail that the devil commands by his mouth, I thought myself all the more Thy true servant. And those who were deceived as I was, seeing me such a complete idolater, loved me, and valued me, and esteemed me, thinking me a person

devoted to Thee, as I thought also, when in truth I was serving the devil of hell, and considering myself worthy of Thy favour on account of my wickedness. For Satan had so lodged the pope and popery in my heart that I cannot think the pope ever had as much faith in himself as I had in him, for at times, as I have heard, he has some degree of misgiving as to whether his doings are good and holy, and I. had none.”

Such, then, was William Farel when he arrived in the great city of Paris to seek for knowledge. He little knew what was the knowledge he was to find there!

But before I tell you this second part of his wonderful history, I would ask you for a moment to look back at the two pictures which have been placed before you in the last few pages. You see the popes, sunk in every form of vice and crime, living shamelessly in open sins, so gross and so vile, that amongst the heathen they would have been seen with horror and disgust; and, on the other hand, you see young William Farel living what man would call a blameless life, and devoted to what he believed to be the service of God. Why does the one picture appear to you so much blacker than the other? Do you say, “Because the popes were hypocrites, and William Farel was sincere?” In that respect there was, it is true, a difference between them. But look in the 1st Epistle to Timothy, and there you will see that the apostle Paul says that according to the righteousness of the law he was blameless; that he obtained mercy because he sinned ignorantly and in unbelief; that he verily thought he ought to do things contrary to the name of Jesus; yet calls himself, or rather, God calls him, “the chief of sinners.” And so also William Farel, when the Holy Ghost had taught him the mind of God, could say of himself, “I was filled with all the devilish idolatry of popery, in which respect I know none who could have equalled me, so that

in truth, amongst all whom I have known, it is I who would have won the crown of curse, of torment, of death, and of damnation, for I was wholly employed, by day and by night, in the service of the devil”

I would wish you to observe, that it was only when God taught him that Farel thus judged of himself. Man would never have judged of sin in this way. Men could look in horror at Alexander VI and Julius II., whilst they looked with pleasure and admiration at William Farel. And why? Because, to man, sins against men appear black and evil, sins against God appear of no account. When the popes committed murder, and adultery, and theft, men with their natural eyes could see something amiss; but what did it matter to them how it stood between man and God? A bad servant will judge of his fellow-servants by their conduct to him, but he will bear with their dishonesty or disrespect towards his master. And so with you and me. Unless God has shed abroad His love in our hearts, our consciences will not reproach us for sin against Him, for unbelief in His great salvation, for following the commandments of men as to His worship and service; and when we do have pricks of conscience, it will be for the smaller matter of sin against our fellows.

Do not mistake me, as though I meant to say that dishonesty, or lying, or unkindness, or malice, or envy are small sins. Quite the contrary. But the great and crowning sin—unbelief in what God has said, believing what man has invented rather than the sure word of God—is little thought of, and the strong language of William Farel will appear to many in these lukewarm days far too strong: for how many are there not amongst us who are esteemed and respected for their goodness, who see no harm in people “agreeing to differ” as to the truth God has made known, who like everyone to be free “to have their own opinions,” who “will not split hairs,” as they



say, “about matters of belief,” and are all the more admired and liked because of these sayings which Satan has put into their mouths! God looks for the man, or woman, or child who is truly anxious not to turn aside half, or a quarter, or a hundredth part of a hair’s breadth from His holy word in belief or in practice. May you who read this be that person!

## *Chapter 6*

### THE WELL OF WHICH WILLIAM DRANK, AND THIRSTED AGAIN

**W**e will now return to William Farel, between whom and the popes there was this difference, that they were walking on the miry side, and he on the clean side, of the broad road that leadeth to destruction. Beware lest you should be walking on either!

The day had come at last when William was to leave his mountain village to go forth into the wide world beyond. He was a simple country boy, and in his quiet home life had been kept out of the way of many of the vices and crimes of great cities. When he came within sight of Lyons, he heard the chime of the church bells from many a tower, and he tells us that his heart leapt up to think of the good and holy people who must live where those bells were “always sounding day and night” “But, alas!” he says, “though I did but pass through without stopping, I saw enough to make me wonder that God did not cleave the earth to swallow up a town so vile and wicked.” He was next to wonder at all he saw in the great city of Paris.

The University of Paris had long been famous as the chief resort of learned men, and of those who wished to learn. Students came there from

all parts of Europe. They lived either in colleges, of which there were several, or in lodgings. One of the colleges of divinity was called the Sorbonne. A large part of the town was called the University. There were classes and lectures, and tutors and professors enough to satisfy any young man who had a thirst for learning. William could be taught Latin to his heart's content. We read that in the houses of the great printers who were working so hard at Paris, even the women, children, and servants always talked Latin. The reason was that they could thus hold conversations with all the foreigners who thronged to Paris. William, therefore, had one of his wishes more than fulfilled. He not only could find a Latin teacher as soon as he arrived, but he could learn Greek and Hebrew also. His other and greatest wish seemed farther away than ever. It was not amongst the Parisian students that he was likely to find a man devoted to God, and to the saints: they were known all over Europe as a wild, disorderly set of young men, caring nothing for religion, or thinking of it only when a great festival came round, such as Christmas, or the Feast of Fools, or the Fair of Lendit.

On these occasions they performed their part in the celebration most vigorously—that is to say, they dressed themselves in their gayest clothes, they drank, they sang, they danced, they fought, and they quarreled, in the churches, in the streets, or wherever else they might be. On the last occasion, the Fair of Lendit, which was to them the great day of the year, they all collected in a large field outside the town, called the Pré aux Clercs, or “the Scholar's Meadow.” On that day two ceremonies were performed there. Firstly, an exhibition of a piece of the true cross. Secondly, the rector of the University bought from the parchment sellers who assembled there, a stock of parchment, which was to last the University for the whole year. This being done, the students feasted, drank and shouted, till in the general

excitement pitched battles would take place. The Fair of Lendit never ended, they say, without bloodshed. Forty years later, it was for this reason forbidden by the government, and as paper was then taking the place of parchment, the pretext for this holiday was removed. The Christmas riots and revels were also gradually put down on account of the disgraceful scenes which took place in the churches. Instead of these feasts, the students betook themselves by degrees to other amusements, such as the acting of plays. Dreadful to relate, it was the death of the Lord Jesus Christ which was thus commonly acted, or other Bible scenes, in which the godless students acted their parts, as Paul, or Moses, or David. Many of them openly blasphemed the name of God; and the Bible, as far as they knew it, they treated as a fable.

William would be roused up in the night by parties of his fellow-students, who roamed the streets, and waked up quiet citizens with their shouts and songs. To catch the constables who pursued them, and pitch them into the Seine, was a favourite amusement with them. They were the terror of the sober, respectable inhabitants of the city, and in this they gloried and delighted.

Farel looked in vain amongst them for the man he desired to find. But a joyful day was in store for him. He had not been long at Paris, when he remarked in one of the churches, in which he was so often to be found, a little old man, of mean and shabby appearance. "God," says he, "seeing me to be such a fearful sinner and infamous idolater, so ordered it that I should meet with another idolater, who surpassed all I had ever seen. Never had I beheld a mass-priest who sang the service with greater reverence, though I had hunted for such people into the very depths of the Carthusian and other monasteries."

“This man, if you wish to know his name, was Master James Faber. He bowed down lower before the images than any other person I had seen in my life. He would stay for an immense time on his knees praying and telling his beads before these images, and I would join him in doing so. I was delighted to have found such a man, slave as he was to the pope, and believing all those things which are most detestable in popish idolatry.”

William soon found means to make the acquaintance of Master Faber. He was rejoiced to hear that he was one of the most learned of the professors in the University of Paris, and was on this account greatly esteemed and respected. He was a doctor of divinity, had studied deeply both heathen and so-called Christian books, had travelled in search of knowledge, not only over Europe, but in Asia and Africa. In the opinion of the great scholar, Erasmus, he stood first amongst the learned men of France. “Amongst thousands,” said Erasmus, “you will not find one Faber.” If he had learnt much, he was equally remarkable as a teacher. It became William’s greatest pleasure to listen to his lectures, to attend his classes, to talk to him, and to follow him from church to church, to worship by his side. William thus had both the desires of his heart fulfilled, in the enjoyment of the friendship of Master Faber. The old man, too, was so kind and sympathizing, so pleasant, and at times so cheerful, that he was a delightful companion.

But he had his moments of sadness. Sometimes he and William would go together, their hands filled with roses and marigolds, and lilies of the valley, to adorn the shrine of the Virgin in the cathedral of Notre Dame; they would kneel side by side, and pray fervently to Mary, and for a time feel very happy. But as they walked home the old man would say to William, “All things are gone wrong, dear William, and some day God will make all things new. You may, perhaps, see it.”

Yes; it was needful, indeed, that God should make all things new, Master Faber also. But this the old man did not know. He could see with grief and anger how little reality there was in the profession of those around him. “How disgraceful is it,” he would say, “to see a bishop asking men to drink with him, gambling, rattling the dice, spending his time with hawks and dogs, and in hunting, halloaing after rooks and deer, and following after evil company!” So far could he see the mote that was in his brother’s eye, but the beam that was in his own—the awful, the accursed sin of idolatry, to this he was stone-blind. Far from having any misgivings as to this, Master Faber was, on the contrary, hard at work just at this time in writing the legends of the saints. These countless stories he carefully collected, and placed them in order as the names of the saints stand in the calendar. It was a long and difficult task, but he thought, poor old man, that it was time well spent, and that he was doing God a service.

Meanwhile Farel worked hard at his studies. At first he read the heathen books, as Master Faber had done before him, hoping there to find some teaching for his soul, for he was told that the old philosophers were men of wonderful knowledge and wisdom. He found his reading all in vain, for he had a desire in his soul which they could not satisfy. He wanted peace with God. “I wished to be a Christian” he says, “with the help of Aristotle, hoping that a bad tree would bring forth good fruit.” He then read more carefully than before the stories of the saints, and “they,” he says, “made me more foolish than I was before.” It was strange to him that with all his diligence in reading, praying and worshipping, he only felt more afraid of God and of eternity. Just at this time “the prodigy of vice,” Pope Julius II gave permission that the writings of the Old and New Testaments should be

called “the holy Bible.” Farel heard this, and felt a respect for the Scriptures he had never felt before. For the first time he began to read them.

“Had it not been that I began to read the Bible,” he says, “it would have been all over with me; for everything on the face of the earth was so entirely perverted from the truth of God, that nothing was left sound and whole but the Bible. But when I began to read it I found myself utterly bewildered. I saw that everything around me, in doctrine and in practice, was just the contrary to the Holy Scriptures. Here, then, was the time when my eyes ought to have been opened, and I ought to have come to my senses, and come out of the accursed delusion in which I had been living. But it was not so. I remained as deluded and as senseless as before; in fact I went from bad to worse, for the moment that the thought struck me how astonishing it was that the Scriptures should be so different from all I had believed, Satan took alarm lest he should lose his victim, and dealt with me according to his custom—for up to that time he had kept me obeying and serving him with my whole heart, and without fear or doubt. I had never thought of enquiring whether I was doing right or wrong. I had taken it as a matter of course that the things which Satan taught by means of the pope were good and perfect, for no other reason than because the pope and the church said so. Thus, whilst I was doing evil and disobeying God, Satan never troubled me with any fear or doubt, but now, just when I ought to have received the word of God into my heart without doubting, Satan turned upon me, and so filled me with fears and doubts lest I should be doing wrong, that I knew not what to think. Sometimes he told me I did not understand what the words meant, that I ought to take them in another sense. Sometimes he said I ought not to trust to my own sense and judgment, but be very careful not to think myself right in the meaning I

attached to the words, that I must obey the church, and believe the words meant what the church said they did. Thus, having listened to the preaching of Satan, I went back into the darkness, and placed myself afresh under the tyranny of the devil, and of the head of all wickedness, the pope.”

A doctor, too, who found William reading the Bible, rebuked him severely, and told him no man should read the Scriptures until he had learnt philosophy. William was obedient, but he had read enough to be utterly miserable. The word had reached his conscience, and his false peace was gone forever. “I was the most wretched of men,” he tells us, “shutting my eyes for fear I should see.” In his restlessness and despair Master Faber could not help him. “He only,” says William, “made me blinder than I was, and led me to plunge myself more deeply into idolatry.”

Some rich people who lived at Paris thought it a good plan to employ William in giving away money to the poor. He was glad to do anything to quiet his mind. But he tried one plan after another in vain—no peace came, though he says he had saviours and advocates with God, who could not be counted: that is to say, the saints, whom he now worshipped more devoutly than ever before. In the woods near Paris, there was a convent of Carthusian monks. To this place William went for a time, to join with the monks in their penances, and to put himself under their rule of fastings and mortifications.

Their rule was a very severe one. They were scarcely ever allowed to speak, and anyone who went for a time to live in retirement with them, as Farel did, might not speak at all, except when confessing to the priest. They ate once in the day, and only met at worship. No wonder that Farel tells us that, from “being a fool, he was fast becoming a madman.”



Happily, he remained but a short time with the Carthusian monks. He then returned to Paris. Perhaps it was that he longed for the company of his dear old master. “Wherever I went,” he says, “I never could find the like of Master Faber.”

## *Chapter 7*

### THE WATER WHICH JESUS GIVES

**B**ut it was not from Master Faber—it was not from a learned doctor, that help was to come. All we know is, that some words were spoken which came as a ray of light from the glory above, shining down into William’s dark and troubled soul. From whose lips those words of grace were sent, is now known to God alone. There were some of the Lord’s little flock in the hidden corners of Paris, poor and despised, and who are long ago forgotten. We know not who they were, but, says William, “they made mention of the gospel. And God knows how, by the most contemptible, He helped me to know the power and the value of the death of Jesus. And when I first heard of these things, for three years and more I prayed to God that He would give me grace to understand the right way. I compared what I heard with the Greek and Latin Testaments, reading them often upon my knees. And I talked over these things with great and small, seeking only to be taught, without despising any.” It may have been some poor serving man, some poor old woman in a garret of the great city, who had now become the teachers of the young professor. For William became during

these years a Master of Arts, and lecturer on philosophy in one of the chief colleges of Paris. But these hidden and despised ones had spoken to him of “the value of the death of Christ,” and that one ray from the glory of the grace of God had made all else dark and dim—that wondrous treasure of the love of God was alone worthy of his thoughts and of his desires. Could he but learn that which the angels desire to look into, all the learning of the doctors of Paris would be to him as dung and dross. “The value of the death of Christ!” Have you known it? The value of that precious blood of the Son of God to Him who gave His Son? Do you know it by looking up to heaven and seeing at God’s right hand the One to whom that glory is His due reward? Be sure, if you have any knowledge of the value of that blood, you will have no doubt as to your welcome into that bright glory, for that blood was shed for you. You will want no other title to be there. You will not think that prayers, or tears, or doings, or feelings, need to be added on to that which is priceless in the eyes of God. And if that blood is not your title to the glory, you have none besides.

It would seem that it was not for some time that William opened his heart to Master Faber. But in the meanwhile his reverence for his old master daily increased. “Inasmuch,” he says, “as Master Faber had a great deal more learning than all the doctors of Paris, he was persecuted by them for that reason, and I began thereby to see the meanness of those doctors, and I esteemed them no longer as I had done. And as that poor idolater (Master Faber) was thus the cause of my ceasing to revere the doctors, so also by his word he turned me from the false thought that I could deserve anything from God.” Yes, it was this question which had perplexed William Farel during those “three years and more.” For if the death of Christ, and that only, saves the sinner who trusts in Him, of what value, then, are his works,

and his repentance, and his prayers, and his alms? What answer would Master Faber give to that? “He said,” William tells us, “we have no merits at all; all is of grace, and of God’s pure mercy, granted to those who deserve nothing. And this I then believed as soon as he told it me.” Yes, Master Faber too, “that poor idolater,” “made mention of the gospel!” He had even written these things so early as the year 1512, in his commentary on the Epistles of Paul. But it was a book but little read, and as to teaching this precious truth, Master Faber seems to have kept it hidden in his heart, half buried, too, beneath a pile of saint-worship and idolatry. This appears to us very hard to understand. But the fallen mind of man is a strange mystery. Like the man who at first “saw men as trees walking,” so it would seem had Master Faber felt the touch of Christ, and the light had shone dimly into his soul, to become clearer and brighter by a second touch of which I now must tell you. “One,” says Farel, “for whom I thank God, spoke to me about worship—that we should worship God alone.” No saints, no images, no angels—God only. Yet Master Faber was still hard at work writing the legends of the countless saints. And when the year 1519 began, he published the legends of all the saints for every day of January; and when February came, the legends of the February saints were published also. But March came and went, and no legends appeared. A change, as sudden as it was extraordinary, had come upon the old professor. It would seem that amidst his toilsome work, the hand of Christ was again laid upon his dimly seeing eyes. He was seized with fear and horror at the words he read in the legends, and at the prayers addressed to the saints. Master Faber gathered them together, and cast them away once and forever. “They are brimstone,” he said, “to kindle the fire of idolatry. We must pray to saints no more. We must worship God alone.” And now with a fuller light from the glory

shining into his soul” did Master Faber begin to teach to all around that which he had seen and heard. He did not do this in his public lectures, for he was only a professor of philosophy, and his lectures were therefore limited to explanations of the old books of the heathen. But in private conversations, it may be in private meetings for preaching, such as had then begun in Paris, he spoke boldly and faithfully of his blessed Lord. “God,” said the old man, “God alone by His grace, through faith justifies the ungodly. He gives unto them eternal life. There is a righteousness of works, which is of man; there is a righteousness of grace, which is of God. The righteousness of grace comes from God Himself. It is a righteousness that comes from God to man. It is not a righteousness which man brings to God. Just as the light comes from the sun, and we receive it with our eyes, so does this righteousness come down from God Himself. The light is not in our eyes, but in the sun. The righteousness of God is revealed to us, and men are justified, that is, they become righteous by believing in Him. Just so a mirror becomes bright with the rays of the sun, and reflects back the light which shone upon it from heaven. It is the image of the sun that it reflects; it has no light of its own.”

“Why, then, should we do good works at all?” asked the Paris doctors. “If we are made righteous by God without doing good works, it is in vain to do them.”

“It is true,” said Master Faber, “we are justified without doing good works. We are justified when we have done nothing at all but bad works, and before we have done one good one. We are justified the moment we believe in Jesus. But just as a tarnished mirror will reflect the light of the sun dimly and imperfectly, so, if we are unholy in our walk and conversation, do we dimly reflect the light which has shone upon our souls

from God. We should be as clean and polished mirrors, in which God is seen reflected.”

It was as if a thunderbolt had fallen amongst the doctors and students of Paris when these wonderful words were spoken. Many of them rose in opposition—some were lost in wonder at the old professor. But there was one meanwhile, who was lost in wonder, not at Master Faber, but at the sight of that blessed One who was now revealed to his soul, who now shone down upon him in His wondrous grace, the Justifier of the ungodly!

William Farel saw neither Master Faber, nor the angry doctors, but Jesus only.

I would ask you to think, before you read further, whether such a moment as this has ever come to you. You may have been trying to “be good,” with a restless, uneasy conscience, and yet with a feeling of satisfaction, thinking that however you broke down, you were at least “doing your best” You hoped God would take this into account, and, being merciful and kind, would perhaps at last consider you fit for heaven, or at least too good to go to hell. And in the midst of all this, has God awakened you to see Jesus? Has He opened your eyes to see that Holy One at His right hand—the One, the only One, with whom He is well pleased? Do you know Him as the One who has borne your sins once and for ever, so that God can look at you and say you are whiter than snow?

Thus it was with him who came from the far country, bringing nothing with him but his sin and his need. Did his father tell him to wash and mend his ragged garments and so make himself fit to come in? No. There was no fitness which he could bring to his father. That which made him fit must come from the father himself, who had endless treasure and endless love. Therefore the father himself it was who brought out the best robe, and put it

on him, and made him fit to sit with him at his table, and to be the delight of his father's heart.

William did not receive all this truth at once. That he was saved by grace, through faith, was the first thing that was clear to him. But must it follow that saint worship and the mass were sins in the sight of God? Must all that had been to him holy and venerable fall at a blow? And could he turn his back upon the pope and all the priests together, who commanded these things?

“Popery,” he says, “only fell down in my heart by little and little; at the first assault it was shaken, but it did not fall. I was very slow in owning the dignity of the word of God, and submitting to Him alone. I was very slow in seeing that all that is not according to that word is an abomination in the sight of God. It was no easy task to weed out of my heart that which was so deeply rooted in it. I found in my experience, and I know others have found it too, that though the kine, which were made by the power of God to leave their calves, went straight along the road in which God led them, yet they lowed as they went, because of the calves they left behind. And thus it was with me. Though the word was plain, and I felt that I must obey it, and could not evade it, yet I could not turn my back on the things that the pope commanded without bitter sorrow, for those things were very dear to me. I would have liked to walk in God's road and take them with me too, but I could not. And I found that others who set out in the same road, and could not make up their minds to leave their calves behind, but took them in their company, did so at the cost of terrible injury to the church of God. They have been as Jeroboams in the church, setting up calves beautiful to behold. But it was Jeroboam who brought division and sorrow, and made Israel to sin. And what we need is that God should give us Josiah's who will cast

down the calves and their altars, and thus draw the hearts of His people away from all that is not His pure gospel. For however terrible will be the judgment upon the pope and his priests, a judgment more terrible than upon any sinners who were before them, still more bitter and more terrible will be the judgment of those who make their boast of the gospel, and yet in life and in doctrine turn aside from God's holy word. Better had they remained in the corruption of popery, and in the vile abominations of the "monasteries."

Farel was right, and his words should stir us up to consider whether we, who so often think ourselves rich and increased with goods, and needing nothing, may not be amongst those of fair profession who will at last be spued out of the mouth of Christ. Better indeed had we never come out of the darkness of popery.



## Chapter 8

### THE LIGHT SHINING IN DARKNESS

**I**t must have been about the beginning of the year 1519 that Master Faber and William Farel were first brought into the fuller knowledge of the gospel of God. This was the beginning of a stormy time in the University of Paris. “Great was the uproar,” we are told, “amongst the students when Jesus Christ was thus preached by James Faber. They began to occupy themselves almost as much with the doctrines of the gospel as with their studies and comedies.”

We are told also that some amongst them united to give battle to the old professor, and to defend the doctrine of salvation by works. These were, as we find it in almost every case, those amongst them whose lives were the worst.

They felt that the gospel condemned their evil deeds, and therefore talked much about good ones. “St. James,” they said, “did not agree with St. Paul, but taught that people were saved by their doings.” “Saint James,” replied Master Faber,” says in his first chapter that every good and perfect gift cometh down from above. Can you deny that salvation is a good and perfect

gift? that righteousness is a good and perfect gift? It is true works are a necessary sign of faith, just as breathing is a necessary sign of life. But a man breathes because he is alive. If he did not breathe you would know he was dead. A man is justified by faith, and works then follow as a necessity.” Master Faber did not stop here, he went on to explain how a holy God could, in justice, thus deal with guilty sinners. Not alone save them in His love and mercy, but also act in justice, and give to sin its due punishment.

He could punish sin and spare the sinner. “Wonderful exchange!” he said; “the Innocent One is condemned, and the criminal acquitted! the Blessed One is cursed, and he who was cursed is blessed! the Life dies, and the dead live! the Glory is covered with shame, and he who was put to shame is covered with glory! And all from God’s free and sovereign love. Those who are saved, are saved because God chose it—by grace, by the will of God, not by their own will. Our own choice, our own will, our own works, are useless; it is the choice of God that alone is the cause of our salvation. When we are converted, it is not our conversion that makes us to be God’s chosen people, but it is the grace, will, and choice of God that makes us to be converted people. And not converted people only. God makes us to be members of the Body of His Son, so that we are filled with Himself, for in Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Oh, if men could but understand this privilege, how purely, how holily, would they live. They would look upon all the glory of this world as disgrace. They would delight themselves in that glory which is hidden from the eyes of the flesh.” Thus taught Master Faber, and henceforth there were in the University of Paris two parties—those to whom the preaching of the cross was foolishness, and those to whom it was the power of God. William Farel drank in with delight

the words of his dear old master, now dearer to him than ever, for he was one of those who had brought him to Jesus.

“Now,” he says, “everything appeared to me as in a new creation. Scripture became clear to me, the light shone in upon my soul. A voice, till now unknown — the voice of Christ, my Shepherd, my Master, my Teacher, now spake to me with power. God, pitying our error, taught us that He only, by Christ, the propitiation for our sins, by Christ, the Mediator and the Advocate, blots out our transgressions for His own sake, inasmuch as they are all cleansed by His blood. To Him alone I clung, after having been tossed about through many troubles, but having now reached the one haven. There is no approach to the Father but by Jesus. If any man put all his trust in Him, he hath eternal life. The artificial outward religion, which leaves the heart uncleansed, became displeasing to me—the observing of days, the choosing of meats, the forbidding to marry. I saw in these things no traces of true piety, but only garments, sounds, and ceremonies, borrowed not only from the Jews, but from the Gentiles, and from idolaters, and I saw that these ceremonies are put in the place of piety and the true worship of God. I read the Scriptures in order to find out the cause of this. I saw that the thoughts of men, their efforts and their inventions, can by no possible means exist together with the true worship of God. Piety therefore, the gospel, the law of God, which is love, have all departed—only the human leaven remains, which is hypocrisy. Nothing has failed of the things which Christ foretold concerning the frightful delusion which should arise in His name. Now do we behold those who bear the name of Christ, but are lovers of themselves, seeking their own interests, laying aside all that belongs to piety. There are many noises, countless chants, words uttered without intelligence, and men who serve not the Lord, but their own belly.” So

spake William Farel. Yes, Christ was now his Master and his Teacher. Master Faber was but as one of the messengers who had brought to him the message of peace. “There is but one Foundation,” said the old man, “one Object, one Head—Jesus Christ, blessed for evermore. Let us not call ourselves after Paul, or Apollos, or Peter. One is our Master, even Christ.”

Thus stood matters in the schools of Paris—on the one side, the astonished and angry doctors and scholars: on the other side, Master Faber, William Farel, and—Christ.

About nine months passed by after Master Faber had thus turned from the legends of the saints to preach Christ only. During that time he taught diligently the things of the Lord, as he had opportunity. It was in vain that he was contradicted, opposed, hated, and despised, by a great number of the priests and doctors. It seemed as though all this signified nothing to him, which was indeed the case. The Lord had set before him an open door, and no man could shut it. Various events were so ordered by God that Master Faber was never silenced, and was even encouraged to hope that the truth would at last be owned by many who heard it. In the first place several years before, the king, Louis XII., had called upon the University to decide whether the pope ought to have absolute power in the affairs of the church. A monk had written a book to prove this, and as the kings of France had for centuries maintained the right of the Church in France to appoint bishops there, Louis XII was not prepared to own the pope’s authority in every point. The University of Paris had decided the question against the pope. It was not always easy to see whether men opposed the pope for their own ends, or because they saw that the Bible condemned him. Master Faber, perhaps, thought sometimes that the light was beginning to dawn, when it was only natural pride and self-will that were at work. But it was really the

case that several amongst the students began to hear the word gladly. Thus there were streaks of light appearing on every side, and had we lived then, we, too, might have thought that the truth would at last be owned by the miserable, fallen church that had so long rejected it

At last one came to listen, from whom Master Faber and William hoped great things. This was Count William Briçonnet, bishop of Meaux. He had known Master Faber in former days, and respected him for his learning. He had provided him with a home in his abbey of S. Germain, where since the year 1507 the old man had found a quiet retreat, and where he had studied far more peaceably than he could have done amongst the students of Paris. Since then Briçonnet had been twice sent to Rome, as ambassador from the king of France to the pope. There was now a new king —Francis I, Louis XII had died Jan. 1, 1515. There was also a new pope; Julius II had died two years before Louis XII. The new pope could not be called a “ferocious monster.” He was a pleasant, gentlemanly man, fond of art and science, and still more fond of luxury and pleasure. He lived to indulge himself in every possible manner, right or wrong— “in wickedness of all sorts,” says a Roman Catholic historian who knew him. The words of this historian are as follows: — “We remember having had, and having adored, a pontiff, who arrived at the height of infidelity. He gave full proof of this by the practice of wickedness of all sorts, for he confessed before some of his servants that neither before he was pope nor after did he believe in the existence of God. Cardinal Bembo once tried to prove to him from Scripture that the soul of man is immortal. He said in a rage, ‘What! you pretend to convince me by a book of fables!’ He stirred up war all over Europe, in order to further the interests of his family. “It is therefore not surprising that the two visits paid to this pope—Leo X.—by the bishop of Meaux, did not confirm him in the

belief that the pope was to be honoured as God. He came back sickened by the revels and feasts of the pope's palace, and betook himself to his old friend, Master Faber. He was thankful, too, to make the acquaintance of William Farel. Several other young men, amongst them two called Arnold and Gerard Roussel, appeared also to have received the gospel. With this little company the bishop studied the word of God, and listened humbly and meekly to the teaching he now heard for the first time. He could not express his joy and thankfulness that the light of the gospel had thus reached him.

Master Faber entreated the bishop to study the Bible for himself, and thus to learn what Christianity was, before man had added to it or taken from it. The bishop read much and fully. He said he could never have enough of such heavenly food. He only wondered that everybody did not see, as he did, that the new teaching was the truth of God. He spoke of the gospel and of the Scriptures to all his friends. Many of these were also friends of the king, and were much at the court. The king's physician, and even his confessor, appeared to listen gladly, and to desire to learn more. All this encouraged Faber and Farel, and was perhaps one reason why Farel did not at once see his way to stand aloof altogether from the church of Rome. He and Master Faber still went to the cathedral and to the churches. It was true, as William said, that popery fell little by little from his heart. But though it fell slowly, it fell surely and steadily. The forms and ceremonies, the chanting and the idolatry, seemed to him, as time went on, more intolerable and wearisome, more profane and sinful. When the crowds were kneeling before an image or an altar, Farel stood amongst them in sorrow and displeasure. "O God!" he would say, "Thou alone art wise! Thou alone art good! Nothing must be taken away from Thy holy law, and nothing added. For Thou alone art the Lord, and Thou alone must command!" The

beautiful services which had been the delight of his heart, were now only hateful and grievous. The priests and doctors whom he had revered, now only appeared to him as the enemies of the gospel. He had seen the glory of Christ, and in the lustre of that light all else was dark to him. Master Faber began to be alarmed lest William should go too far. If they had at that time begun to talk over the necessity of leaving the church of Rome, it was a point upon which they could not see alike. There are many of God's servants who have at last to say, "We would have healed Babylon, but she could not be healed!" Of this number was Master Faber. He clung to the hope that the church he still loved and revered might be "made new"—that priests and people would at last turn from their idols to the living and true God. They had not heard the gospel before, but now that God had put the blessed message into his mouth, who could say what the power of that word might be? Let them only go on, teaching boldly and faithfully, at the risk of opposition, and suffering, and death, and the church of Rome might yet be cleansed and restored, and all might be as in the days when Paul preached the gospel, and man had not yet added to it. Soon an event happened which no doubt confirmed Master Faber in his hopes of better days.

The king's sister, Margaret, duchess of Alençon, was already celebrated for her great talents, her kindness of heart, and her extraordinary influence over the king, her brother. Margaret was a friend of Briçonnet. She talked freely to him and to others about the court, who were beginning to hold the "new opinions." Some of her ladies gave her tracts, which Briçonnet had given to them. She read them eagerly, for her heart was sick and weary amidst the folly and gaiety of her brother's dissolute court. She now desired to see Master Faber and William Farel, and to read the word of God with them and with the bishop. And thus it would seem that the Princess

Margaret was really converted to God. She did not cease to be a papist, nor did she follow the Lord fully in any way, for she knew Him but very dimly. Still we cannot but think of her as one who, after a sorrowful and doubtful course, will yet be found amongst the number of those who now sleep in Jesus. In any case it is certain that she used her influence with her brother, the king, on the side of the truth. She encouraged those who preached it, and, as far as she had power, she protected them from persecution and opposition.

The king himself, too, was by no means inclined to silence Faber and Farel. This also may have raised vain hopes in the mind of Master Faber. He may have thought that the king was almost persuaded to be a Christian. But in the case of Francis, it was simply dislike to the tyranny of the priests, which made him rejoice that anyone should dare to contradict them. "I like to show" he said, "that a king of France is not to be kept in leading strings." He despised the priests, too, for their ignorance, and their dislike to learning. They even spoke against printing as a wicked invention of the devil, and accused the printers of being wizards. Francis I, who was an intelligent man, and who took an interest in all these new discoveries, seems at first to have looked upon the gospel as one of the modern inventions, which was to improve the world in general. It was only later, when he found that it condemned his vices and his crimes, that he thought otherwise. He discovered in time that the evil deeds which the priests allowed, and for which he could buy pardons from the pope, were condemned unsparingly by the gospel, and it then needed all the entreaties of his beloved sister Margaret, to prevent him from siding with the priests he hated, in order to put it down. But at first it was not so, and Master Faber hoped on.



Then, again, there came cheering news to Paris from across the Rhine. A German monk had dared to teach and preach openly, as early as the year 1517, that the pardon of sins was not to be bought with money, but was given by God to sinners, without money and without price. That to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ was the way to be saved. He had even dared to post up a paper upon the doors of the church at Wittemberg, warning people not to buy the pardon of their sins from the pardon-seller. He had been stirred up to do this, because the pope, Leo X, had opened a market for the sale of pardons. He had sent pardon-sellers through the towns and villages of Europe, to offer for money such pardons as no pope had ever sold before. People might buy pardons, not only for past sins, but for sins they meant to commit. Each sin had its price, and might be committed without fear or shame, if paid for beforehand. The souls of the dead might be redeemed from purgatory on the spot, for a small sum. All this money was to go towards the restoration of the church of St. Peter's at Rome. "How profitable," said the pope, as the large sums were paid into his coffers which the pardon-sellers brought back, "How profitable has this fable of Jesus been to us!" For it was not only the church of St Peter, but the feasts and amusements of the pope, for which large sums of money were needed. To the rich was the pope's gospel preached, and those who turned a deaf ear to the gospel of God from heaven, listened to the gospel from Rome.

The German monk spoke boldly against this sale of the souls of men. He had not the light and knowledge which William Farel had; but he was an honest and a brave man, and, as far as God had enlightened his mind, he spoke out, and wrote papers and books which were spread far and wide. About the year 1519 they reached Paris, and the little band of Christians read them eagerly, and thanked God for them. This German monk was

Martin Luther. But it was not from the teaching of man that William Farel had learnt to know Christ. Whilst many were ready to believe every word which Luther wrote, William again betook himself to prayer. He searched the Scriptures, and compared them with Luther's books. Instead, therefore, of becoming a follower of Luther, he raised his voice against the errors which Luther still held and taught. At the same time, he joyfully owned the truth of much that Luther wrote. But he could not rejoice in seeing that Luther's books were read by many who could not distinguish between truth and falsehood. "The gospel in France is hindered," he wrote, three or four years later, "by the reading of Luther's earlier writings, which admit, in a measure, the adoration of saints, and the existence of purgatory. These errors were condemned amongst us some years back, even in the public preaching. "Amongst us," refers, no doubt, to the "little flock" of believers at Paris. We find that they met together for prayer and worship, and for the reading and preaching of the word. We find also that Farel himself was the chief preacher amongst them. "We have had no preachings since you left," wrote one of them in the year 1524; "how have things changed since your departure! The old traditions are brought up again; the word of God is neglected, and the faithful only explain it in fear and trembling. Gerard Roussel has paid us but one or two visits, and that without preaching. Oh, that you would come to our help!" Such are the little glimpses that we possess of the short time, during which William Farel stood forth at Paris as the Lords witness against all that was of man, whether taught by a Romish doctor, by the great Luther himself, or even by Master Faber. For Master Faber still believed in purgatory. He was still beclouded as to many blessed truths. And William Farel had to learn how true is the word, "One is your Master, even Christ."

## Chapter 9

### HOW THE DARKNESS BEGAN IN THE CHURCH OF GOD

**W**illiam Farel, meanwhile was not only teaching boldly, but studying deeply. He read most, and very carefully, the blessed word of God. He also read the history of the church. He wished to find out, how it was that men had so wandered into the darkness—how it came to pass, that having once known the gospel, they were now calling evil good, and good evil—as ignorant and as senseless as the heathen. He read the sad story of the early days of the church, and he talked it over with the learned priests of Paris, who had advised him to read these writings of the fathers.

You shall hear of what he learnt from his studies and conversations in his own words. They are words that many amongst us may remember with profit “St. Paul,” he says, “spoke these words:” ‘Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.’ This sentence is worthy to be written in all our hearts, being in truth spoken by God Himself through the mouth of the holy apostle. And this good personage was thus led to speak on account of the evil ways of heretics, who dared to teach what they could

not prove by the holy Scriptures, who dared to set up their own reasons and opinions in the face of the fact that the things they taught were not to be found in the Scriptures at all. And, in truth, all the ruin and downfall of men has always come from the same source—namely that they persisted in adding to, or taking from, the word of God. You see that in the time of the holy apostle, these teachers were not contented with the grace and truth which were fully and plentifully preached by Paul; they began to hinder the truth and to hinder God’s blessing—not by disapproving of the preaching of Jesus Christ, they approved of it in fact—but they persisted in adding to it that which God had not commanded. They added to it those things which God had never commanded to believers in Jesus, but to the nation of Israel. It is true these false teachers had some show of having the right on their side, because it was a fact that God did speak to Moses, and what Moses commanded was really by the order of God, and the apostles themselves had observed those ceremonies. But the holy apostle Paul, and God who spoke by his mouth, would give no ear to such excuses; he would not admit that Moses, to whom the Gentiles had never been given in charge, was to be ranked with Jesus Christ, nor that Moses was to be added on to Christ to give salvation and life. And not only does Paul say that the ordinances of Moses were unnecessary for believers; he goes much further, and says, on the contrary, that all who teach such things are to be detested, and held as accursed—that they are miserable troublers of the church, and that any such ought to be entirely disowned, even should such a teacher prove to be an angel from heaven—such an angel should be held as accursed by God ; for nothing is to be added, nothing to be diminished from that which God has said. His holy and perfect word is to be kept pure and entire.

“The apostle Paul says, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, that what he preached was to be proved by the Scriptures, and he says also that all Scripture is written by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

“If all could receive this pure truth, and give to Christ that honour which belongs to Him, and if the old fathers had, in every single matter, kept to that rule, there would have been no need now to write against evil doctrine, and to have such trouble to weed out of the hearts of men the things which have taken such deep root in them. On the contrary, all that is not contained in the holy Scriptures, all that has no foundation there, would have been held in abhorrence; and, instead of writing as they did with such affection about the sign of the cross and such like things, the old fathers would have opposed them, as not contained in the Bible; they would have firmly resisted everything of the sort. But by lack of having kept to that safe rule, it happened that as soon as one of the old fathers, who had an appearance of great goodness and great wisdom, turned a little aside from the straight path, the next who followed did a little worse, and by this means many wretched and wicked inventions of men were brought in. But God by His grace, ordered it that the fathers should be judged out of their own mouths, for when they were waked up by heretics, they were obliged to have recourse to the Scriptures to expose their errors; they were driven to the necessity of condemning these heretics by the word of God, in doing which they also condemned themselves, for they, too, had taught as doctrines things which were not in the Scriptures at all.”

William then remarks how the Lord Jesus, who could not err, and who was Himself the truth, always confirmed His words by the Scripture, and

explained to His, apostles that the history of His coming into the world, of His life, death, resurrection, and of His great salvation, all this was written beforehand in the Scriptures. And that much more need is there that those who teach and preach now, should be able to prove their words by the Bible. “Otherwise,” he says, “we must be as reeds shaken with the wind, whereas we ought to be firm in Christ, knowing for certain that we have His word for everything, and thus the gates of hell shall never prevail against us. This is what God requires of all Christians; He looks for it from each one, and admits nothing less in any who are members of the Body of Christ, sheep of the Good Shepherd. And he who does not know what he is to believe, nor whom he is to believe, nor how he is to believe, who hears no difference between the voice of Jesus and other voices, who cannot distinguish between the voice of the shepherd and the voice of the stranger, he does not belong to Jesus Christ as yet, he is not in Christ at all. It is no use to say, ‘I have always been used to believe and to teach so and so;’ it is no use to say, ‘Our pastors and teachers tell us this or that.’ For custom without truth is useless. God never has approved, and never will approve, anything but the truth, and He will judge us by that. The pastor and teacher must keep to the word of God only, and feed the flock with that, otherwise he is a blind leader of the blind, and all together will fall into the ditch. And now that things are come to that, that everything is poison, except that heavenly bread, the word of God, it is quite certain that whosoever attempts to feed upon other food than that will be poisoned, and die.”

William remarks also, that such is the power of the word, when preached purely and simply, that he asks no further witness of that power than the consciences of those who oppose it They oppose it just for that reason, because they feel its force. The whole of popery, he says, falls at once, the

moment we admit that the word of God alone is the rule to guide us. “Where, then,” he says, “is the authority for the mass, and such like services? Where is the authority for the consecration of altars and of churches? Where is the authority for using the sign of the cross? God has not commanded any of these things. And if we once admit that it is lawful for a man in any one thing to command and order that which God has not commanded! where are we to stop? How are we to have any rule, if once we step beyond the plain word of God? Oh, that it might please God, in His grace, to open the eyes of this poor world, so that they might seek no longer to make excuses for anything which is not to be found in the holy Scriptures, that they might believe, do, hold, and follow nothing that is not to be found there.”

He gives the example of the council at Jerusalem, in Acts xv. “It was in truth a holy council,” he says; “not of anti-christian popes, nor of cardinal-princes of Sodom, nor of bishops of Gomorrah, nor of abbots who go in the way of Balaam. These, alas, are of no use to the world, except to stand as beacons to all men by their evil doctrines and their abominable lives, which are as much as to say,” Do not follow us in anything! But at the council of Jerusalem were assembled the most favoured and gifted of God’s faithful servants, and yet all that they there ordered, was not to be held as binding upon any, except as proved by the Scriptures.

“But when we come to the fathers, how can it be said without speaking wickedly, that all they taught was according to the Scriptures? Look at St. Ambrose (who tells us how the Empress Helena went to Jerusalem to find the true cross). He says, in the first place, she set forth on her journey to the holy places. I should like him to prove to me by the word of God, that there is one place on the earth more holy than another. For the Lord Jesus Christ

said that people ‘should neither on this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.’ By these words He overturns the thought of any difference between one place and another, just as the Scripture also tells us there is no difference between one day and another. Ambrose tells us also that the Spirit inspired Helena to seek the wood of the cross. Still less could he prove that to me from Scripture, unless he meant that it was an evil spirit that thus inspired her. For the Holy Ghost never inspired anybody, and never will, to believe or do more or less than the Lord Jesus had told them beforehand, and then the Scriptures had declared. To say that the Holy Spirit inspired anyone to seek for the wood of the cross is against His nature, which is to turn away our hearts from the things which are seen, from the things of the earth, and to turn them to the unseen things that are in heaven. How could the Holy Spirit direct the heart of Helena to things below, seeing that the precious body of Jesus Christ, which surpasses all that is in heaven, as well as all that is on earth, is no longer here? He has left this earth, He is no more in this world. And why is this? Is it not in order that none might seek Him here below, but that with all the desire of our hearts we should seek Him there, where He is, in heaven, at the Father’s right hand! Thus does the Holy Spirit teach, when He teaches at all. Looking with the eye of faith, we see the Lord Jesus, we see Him who died for our sins, who rose again for our justification, who died in obedience to the Father, and who arose in triumph, alive with immortal life, who ascended in triumph to the right hand of the Majesty on high, who from thence gave great gifts, the fruit of His victory, the excellent graces of the Holy Spirit; who thus enriched His Church, which is His Body, by the gifts of ministry, and other gifts which should serve to that same holy ministry.



And this ministry was to be in order that the church might know and understand the endless riches which it possesses in Christ.”

## *Chapter 10*

### HOW THE DARKNESS DEEPENED

**W**illiam proceeds to say how the utter ruin of the church was brought about by the favour shown to it by the Roman Emperor Constantine. “The Christians,” he says, “having received these favours, fell into the snare of following and obeying those who thus favoured them, instead of looking diligently into the Bible to see what they ought to observe and do. We may, therefore, say that the heretics who taught false doctrines were really more useful to the Christian fathers than the emperors who favoured them, for the heretics at least stirred them up to search the Scriptures more diligently than they would have done, had they had no heretics to contradict” Thus the more William read of the fathers, the less did he respect them. “Ambrose,” he says, “writes down for us all the senseless things which Helena said about the cross; whereas if she had really said them, she ought to have been rebuked, and told not to speak like a fool. Alas! we find from reading the fathers, how not only those in these latter days have gone astray from God—in these days of complete ignorance, of idolatry, of entire revolt against Christ, against faith, and

against the gospel—in these days when we see how far away the blind could lead the blind— but we find in the books of the fathers how at first wise and holy men began already to swerve from the right way, even as soon as the churches had multiplied after the days of the apostles. These holy men were greatly admired for their wisdom and goodness; but for all that they erred and sinned grievously, in ordering things which are not in the word of God, but which are condemned therein. They acted without the commandment of Jesus Christ They should, therefore, serve as a warning to us, lest we, too, should comply with things which God has not commanded. For things cannot be ordered more decently, nor in more complete order, than God’s order—that order which Christ commands. There is no better conformity than conforming to the word of God; there is no leader to be followed, wiser and better than Jesus Christ. If the sacrifices, the dresses, the observances of Moses, were all to give place to Christ, it is easy to judge what we should do with all those things which were invented after Christ. Let it be enough for us that the pastors should be those God Himself sends forth; the doctrine that which He has vouched for; that the places where Christians meet should be decent and convenient; that those received at the Lord’s table should be such as the Scripture directs; that all should be done simply according to the gospel. If Jesus Christ and the gospel, believed and followed, are not enough to ensure that Christians should assemble reverently and in the right way, how else is it to be done? Who can order this if Christ cannot? All will go well when Christ alone is owned in the church.”

The priests replied to all such reasoning in various ways. Some said that it was a fact that the sign of the cross drove away Satan. “The cross,” they said, “is the sword which kills the devil”

“Where, I ask you,” said William, “is the devil more evidently present and alive than in the person of the pope, who wears three crosses on the top of his head, and is covered with crosses down to his slippers?—than in the service of the mass, where more crosses are to be seen than in any other service?”

Others argued that the old fathers did not mean that the cross was to be adored, but that it stood for Christ Himself.

“It is no use,” said William, “to try to excuse and colour the words they used. It is much better to own that they did not speak according to Scripture. In the Old Testament we find types and figures, but the gospel speaks plainly and simply, of the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ, in words clear and full, without mystifying anything; and we should speak in the same way, naturally, simply, and calling things by their right names. We ought not to talk of altars and sacrifices if we mean something else. To say the cross is the hope of Christians, is blasphemy, if we mean the cross and not Christ. And if we mean Christ, how inconsistent is it to see the cross mixed up with worldly ornaments, stuck upon crowns and diadems, and robes of scarlet!

“Does the cross then mean Christ? Jesus Christ stands far apart from all this worldly finery. And if we are Christians, we are not of the world, but new creatures. For Christ is not of the world—He is gone away from the world to the Father, and is in heaven, not on earth. But the truth is that the cross is put in the place of Him who died—in the place of that precious blood which alone can wash away sin. He who believes in Jesus hath everlasting life. But that we should be thus redeemed, it needed nothing less than Himself—the One Saviour Jesus, true God and true man—it is Himself who has done it all Oh, that all might believe and own this blessed Saviour

as their Redeemer and Deliverer, might know themselves saved by believing His blessed gospel, and that all would thank and praise that gracious Father who gave them a Saviour so great and so excellent. Let us satisfy our hearts with Him, and look to Him, and occupy ourselves no more with crosses, than with Judas or Pilate, or any other tormentors of that blessed Saviour. For the Holy Spirit teaches Christians that they are dead to sin and alive in Christ, risen in newness of life, and that thus risen they should seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, and that they should set their affections on the things that are above, not the things that are on earth.” The priests of Paris heard with anger that Farel could thus dare to say that the fathers themselves had fallen into sin and folly. But William answered that it did not matter who spoke, if the words spoken did not agree with the Bible. “Let us not fear to contradict anybody if what they say is not to be proved by the Scriptures,” he said. “Let us rather own, O Lord, Thou alone canst not lie nor err, and nothing can be right but that which is according to Thy holy word. And let us condemn by that word all that the greatest, the wisest, and the holiest have said, if their sayings do not accord with it. Who is there who would not condemn the idolatry of Solomon? His wisdom is no reason why we should not detest his sin. David was a very good and holy man, but that ought not to prevent us from saying that he sinned. It is a warning to us also, lest we should think ourselves safe from making mistakes. If we could be like angels, we ought, nevertheless, to keep a tight rein upon our actions, our words, and even our thoughts, and look to see if they agree with the word of God, if not, we sin.”

But William found that the doctors of Paris were by no means willing to admit that the Bible was enough. “On the contrary,” he said, “the books of

the fathers which are often as contrary to the Scripture as the flesh to the spirit, are preferred by them to the word of God. Instead of being satisfied with the Bible, they insist upon adding them on to it, just as if people tried to adorn gold and gems by sticking upon them dung and dirt. Instead of trying to understand and explain the word, they mix it up with the dreams of men, running after Helenas and bits of wood, and thrusting forward what is not in the Bible at all. And thus all this ruin and destruction has come. And just as it is a mark of utter blindness not to see the ruin, so is it a mark of cowardice and wickedness to encourage people to go on in the confusion into which we are fallen. There is no blessing from God upon such as do it. They arm themselves with the excuse that ancient custom and sightly shows are not to be lightly set aside; and even those who really desire that God should be worshipped spiritually, dare not say a word against old forms and ancient fathers. If the church had never allowed one single thing which is not plainly ordered in Scripture, we should never have fallen into the deep pit of error, idolatry, and superstition, where we now find ourselves, the idolatry of Christendom, worse than any idolatry that was ever seen before!”

Some of the least ignorant of the priests and doctors went so far as to agree that people ought to be told that the images and crosses are not in themselves to be worshipped. “It is easy to tell the people,” they said, “that they should worship God only. But the fault is in them if they are idolatrous, not in the crosses and images, they might remain as before, they do no harm.”

“The good king Hezekiah,” says Farel, “condemns you there. He did not content himself with telling the people not to worship the brazen serpent. That serpent had been made by the great servant of God, Moses himself,

and by the commandment of God. It was an outward and visible sign of the greatest work that God ever did or ever will do, namely, of the putting away of our sins by the death of Christ. But Hezekiah made no difficulty about breaking it to pieces. He did not think it enough to preach to the people that they were to leave off worshipping it. He not only broke it in pieces, but he gave it a name of contempt, he called it ‘that piece of brass.’ I have just as much right as he had, to speak with detestation of those things which men have said and done contrary to the pure word of God. I have more right, for the worship which God looks for from Christians is a higher thing than the worship at Jerusalem—it is a worship of the Father in spirit and in truth.”

I have told you at some length of these words of William Farel. You must not think that he saw all this at once. It was a matter of months and years, for he had to unlearn and to learn in no small degree. But having once got firm hold of the truth that everything added by man to the word of God was an evil thing, one piece of popery after another fell down from the place it had had in his heart. And I have thought it well to tell you so much of what he has said on this subject, for a reason that should fill us with shame and sorrow.

Three hundred and fifty years have passed away since William Farel first taught men that they should search the Scriptures to find out how much in their belief and worship has no foundation there. But alas! if this were now to be done, how much is there, not only in popish, but in Protestant countries, that would be overthrown by such a test as that! If each person were to make an honest list of everything he does and allows in the worship and service of God, for which he can find no plain direction in God’s blessed word, and if all the things found in such lists were added together, what a long list, alas! would it make! And sadder still, if a second list were

made of all the men and women who were willing therefore to give up at once and for ever, all that is found in that long list, how short would that second list be! And yet we cannot but see that were Christian people willing thus to act, leaving nothing to be believed or done but that which God directs in His word, then “all that believe would be together”—they would have nothing to divide them into sects and parties, for there would be one rule, and that a perfect rule, for all alike.

But William Farel spoke in vain to all but a few, and perhaps there are not many more now who are willing to go back to the Scriptures only, and let all else go to the winds. The heart of man is not changed since 1520, nor is the world less at enmity with God, nor is Satan less busy. Therefore all that opposed the teaching of Farel then, is ready to oppose such teaching now. For the things that are of man are dear to the natural heart, and the things that are of God are hateful to it.



## *Chapter 11*

### THE DAY OF GRACE FOR PARIS

**Y**ou can well believe that as time went on the priests and doctors of the Paris University became more openly and bitterly the enemies of Master Faber and of Farel. Though they had the protection and favour of the Princess Margaret, and of the bishop of Meaux, it would have been impossible that they should have preached and taught as they did in spite of all opposition, had not the Lord kept the door open, and shielded them with the arm of His strength. In His love and grace, He had determined that the gospel of His Son should be preached to the dark and blind leaders of the blind, and none could silence those whom He sent. The doctors of Paris could see nothing in William Farel but a self-confident, irreverent young man. That he should come from his little village in the Alps, and with a Bible in his hand, defy the popes, the priests, and all the fathers put together, was an unheard-of insolence. Plain speaking, “calling things by their right names,” as William said, was as intolerable a habit then as now. And to be thus summoned to try all their sayings and doings by the Bible only, was indeed a fatal test to one and all of them. Thus that day of grace

passed by, the one only time in the whole history of France, when the Lord thus sent forth His glad tidings to the leaders and teachers of the nation, and the solemn question arose whether they would believe it or reject it. That old professor and that young man who spoke to them, we are told “with a voice of thunder,” had come in the name of God, and he who despised them, despised Him who sent them. It was, therefore, an awful moment in the history of that unhappy nation. When we read of the murders of St. Bartholomew, of the fearful massacres of the saints in the centuries that followed, and of God’s tremendous judgments on king and people eighty years ago, and since, we can see what a different history of France there would have been to write, had Paris believed the message which Faber and Farel brought from God.

I must now tell you the answer that the University of Paris gave to the message.

You will remember that in the time of the old king, Louis XII., the University of Paris had taken part against the monk, who said that the pope ought to have supreme authority in the church. But now times were changed. Two persons had, since the death of Louis XII., taken to themselves a large share in the affairs of the government. These two persons were the mother of King Francis, Louise of Savoy, and her favourite, Anthony Duprat, who was Cardinal Archbishop of Sens, and withal Chancellor of France.

Both one and the other had reasons of their own for hating the gospel with an extreme hatred. Louise was a woman of profligate life, and of a tyrannical temper. Duprat, who was called by a Roman catholic historian, “the most vicious of bipeds,” had become a clergyman in order to heap up riches by the many unlawful means which were always at hand for priests

who were cunning enough to use them. He also was a man of dissolute habits. By opposing the gospel these two servants of Satan not only gratified their natural desires, but they also hoped to cover their evil lives with a cloak of zeal for God and the church. Louise had great influence over her son. She persuaded him to allow the pope a greater power than he had ever had before in the affairs of the church in France.

In return for the king's friendship, the pope yielded to him the right to appoint bishops and clergymen throughout his kingdom. The king made a profitable trade of these offices, "just," we are told, "as at Venice people made their fortunes by trading in pepper and cinnamon." Encouraged by the hatred which Louise and Duprat showed to the preaching of the gospel, the University, the Sorbonne in particular, took courage, and consulted as to how best the preachers could be silenced.

The chief speaker in these consultations was a man called Noel Bedier, the syndic of the Sorbonne. You must remember his name, as the third great enemy of the gospel of God at that time. He was a man of mean abilities, but possessed of a loud voice, and a determination to make himself heard. He delighted in quarrels of all sorts, and was more pleased to find an enemy, than most people would be to find a friend. He had a special hatred for Master Faber, because he came from the same province, Picardy, as he himself did, and had gained a reputation for learning and talent which filled Bedier with rage and jealousy. Such an amount of ignorance, stupidity, prejudice, and hypocrisy, filled the soul of this wretched man, that Erasmus said he was like three thousand monks in one person. He spoke long, loudly, and frequently, in answer to Faber and to Farel. A crowd of monks and priests, as ignorant as their leader, listened to him with shouts of delight and approval. Some approved of him simply from stupidity, thinking that

the man who had so much to say must be in the right; others, because they were delighted to hear Faber and Farel contradicted; and some because they thought anyone who spoke for the church of Rome must have the truth on his side. Bedier was too ignorant to bring forward any arguments against the gospel. He did not understand the matter sufficiently to know what he was to contradict. But he had read in some old book that the sinful woman, in Luke vii., Mary Magdalene, and Mary the sister of Lazarus, were all one and the same person, and finding that Master Faber said they were three different people, he loudly accused him to the University of being a heretic. Not only Paris, but the whole of Christendom was aroused into anger against Master Faber for holding such evil opinions. An English bishop wrote a book against him, proving that the three women were but the one Mary Magdalene. The whole University of Paris declared that Master Faber ought to suffer the punishment due to heretics. But the king, who was on bad terms with the University, was glad of this opportunity of humbling the priests and doctors. He gave orders that Master Faber was to be left in peace. Thus the Lord granted him yet for a little while an open door at Paris.

Bedier, filled with rage and disappointment, that he could not burn Master Faber, determined, however, to annoy him in every possible manner. The old doctor continued to teach amidst insult and persecution, until the month of November of that year 1519. He then left Paris, to go we know not where. It seems probable he was absent till the spring of the year 1521, when his friend the Bishop of Meaux invited him to come and help in making the gospel known in his diocese. He promised him a safe refuge, and all possible liberty in preaching and teaching. Master Faber, wearied

out by his persecutors at Paris, gladly retired to the city of Meaux, having left William Farel to oppose Bedier single-handed.

Meaux is an ancient city, about thirty miles from Paris. For two years back the bishop had been very busy there, and, indeed, in all parts of his diocese. He was anxious that the truth which he had learnt should be preached in every town and village. He had, therefore, gone himself into every parish, and inquired as to the preaching and the lives of the clergy. Alas! he found the same sad tale to be told wherever he went. The clergy were living to please themselves. They spent their time chiefly in amusements at Paris. They left their parishes either to curates, or to be visited by the Franciscan monks from Meaux. The curates were no better than the upper clergy; the monks were simply begging impostors, who grew rich upon the gifts of the ignorant people. "The only business of these shepherds," said the bishop, "is to shear their sheep." Briçonnet, therefore, forbade the monks to preach, dismissed a number of the priests, and resolved to train others, who should preach the gospel of God. In the meantime he was glad of the help of Master Faber.

William Farel may be said to have stood very much alone at this time at Paris. His friends Gerard and Arnold Roussel, and others, who had really, it would seem, believed the gospel, hoped by means of it to reform the church of Rome. To Farel this hope appeared each day to be not only a vain, but a mistaken hope. He felt that it was a time when a Christian man should cast aside every other consideration, and simply go back to the word of God. Instead of trying to find a place for the gospel of God amidst the inventions of men, he desired that all that was of man should be swept away, and that only that which was of God should remain. He longed for the time when every plant which his Father had not planted should be rooted up.

And, therefore, instead of reforming Rome, he would have no Rome. He would point men back to the days of Paul, to the upper room at Troas, to the time when there were no priests, no altars, no consecrated buildings, no vestments, no forms—but Christ. Christ only, and His blessed word. “If Christ is not enough—if His word will not keep things straight,” he would say, “how can you expect that anything you can add to it, or that ever has been added to it, will do so?” No wonder that the priests of Paris stopped their ears, and the doctors of the Sorbonne closed every door against the man who would measure them against the Bible, and that only.

And now a testing time came for the University of Paris. For two years had the gospel sounded in the ears of the priests and doctors. God would now put them to the proof. Would they have His blessed word of grace and salvation, or would they reject it? Luther, whose teaching had been condemned by the church of Rome, had appealed to the University of Paris to decide between him and the champion of Rome, John Eck. Luther and Eck had met at Leipsic to hold a public disputation as to the claims of Christ, and of the pope. Paris was to consider all that had been said on both sides, and to decide as to which of the two, Luther or Eck, had spoken the truth. Twenty copies of the arguments of each were sent to Paris early in the year 1520.

For more than a year the University consulted over these papers. “All Europe,” we are told, “was waiting for the decision of the University of Paris.” Bedier had much to say upon the subject. He, with his loud voice, his crowd of ignorant followers, and of angry priests, won the day. In April, 1521, the University decreed that Luther’s books should be publicly burnt in the streets of Paris.

William Farel could no longer have any doubt as to whether Paris had rejected the gospel. Master Faber entreated him to come to Meaux, where he might preach freely, and where there were souls longing for the bread of life. Thus William turned from the city which would have none of Christ and His word, and with a few of his friends, including the Roussels, he arrived at Meaux. There were, perhaps, none who had any thought that with William Farel's departure, the day of grace for Paris had closed. Christ had said of His servants of old, "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me." Thus had Paris, in the person of that young man, despised God Himself.

But God, who can cause the light to shine out of darkness, had in His grace and power turned the senseless and ignorant speeches of Bedier into an occasion of blessing for one soul. A young nobleman of Picardy, Louis de Berquin, had for some time been remarked for his strict devotion to the church of Rome. He was a man of blameless moral character. He spent his time in study, and in attending the services of the church. He spoke strongly and frequently against the doctrines of Luther. At the same time he severely reproved the priests and monks who were living in sin, and making a gain of religion. He hated meanness and hypocrisy, and seems to have been, however mistaken, thoroughly honest and sincere. He listened to the arguments between Bedier and the teachers of the gospel at Paris, and though he did not believe that Faber and Farel were right, he was roused to anger by the false arguments and the blustering of Bedier and the monks, and above all, by their malicious endeavours to annoy and misrepresent those whom they could not prove to be in the wrong. On the other hand, he found that Faber and Farel were at least outspoken and real, and that they

appealed to the Bible to prove all they said. Thus Berquin, disgusted with the priests, and perplexed by the plain statements of Farel, betook himself to the reading of the Bible, and as he read, the light broke in upon his mind. We shall hear of him again by-and-bye. In the meantime let us return to William Farel.



## *Chapter 12*

### THE HAPPY DAYS AT MEAUX

**W**illiam Farel, with his voice of thunder, preached in the streets and markets, and wherever a room could be found. The people crowded to hear the new and blessed words; not how they were to give their money to the priests and monks, but how they were to receive from God the unsearchable riches of Christ. Let me tell you, in William Farel's own words, what it was that he had to preach to them.

“What, then, are those treasures of the goodness of God, which are given to us in the death of Jesus Christ? Firstly, if we diligently consider what the death of Jesus was, we there shall see in truth how all the treasures of the goodness and the grace of God, our Father, are magnified, and glorified, and exalted, in that act of mercy and love. Is not that sight an invitation to wretched sinners to come to Him who has so loved them, that He did not spare His only Son, but delivered Him up for us all? Does it not assure us that sinners are welcome to the Son of God, who so loved them that He gave His life, His body, and His blood, to be a perfect sacrifice, a complete ransom for all who believe in Him!

“For He it is who calls to all those who labour and are heavy laden, saying He will give them rest He it is who spoke in His love to the wretched thief, giving him a place in heaven, saying to him, ‘Verily, I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.’ He it is who so loved and pitied His enemies, who hated Him unto death, that He prayed, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

“It was then, when He was suffering and dying for us, that He could, nevertheless, speak to the heart of that unhappy thief, and draw him to Himself; that He could manifest Himself in His grace to those wicked and abominable Italian soldiers, so that they and their captain were constrained to smite upon their breasts, and to own that He was a righteous man, and that He was the Son of God.

“And lastly, if we behold diligently that death of Christ, there we see how the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. And why? Because that hidden place into which none might enter, was now revealed and thrown open by the death of Jesus, so that all who believe have access and free entrance there—may go in boldly, in full assurance of faith—may come before the throne of grace, and find plenteous mercy, and grace to help in time of need. For He who is the Son of God, the power and the wisdom of God, He who is God Himself, so humbled Himself as to die for us. He the holy and the righteous One, for the ungodly and for sinners, offering up Himself that we might be made pure and clean. And it is the will of the Father, that those whom He thus saves by the precious gift of His Son, should be certain of their salvation and life, and should know that they are completely washed and cleansed from all their sins.

“And the Father, for the love of Himself, and not for the love of us, nor of our doings, our deservings, and our righteousness (which are simply

abominations)—He, the Father, saves us, and gives to us eternal life. Yes, it is for the love of Himself, that His counsel may stand, to quicken and to save those whom He has ordained to life, without any respect to persons. He sees nothing to cause His love in the sinner whom He saves—nothing in his works, nor in his race, nor in his country, nor in anything belonging to him. He pardons all his sins and transgressions on account of the work of His beloved Son. He gives the precious gift of His Son to the wretched prisoner of the devil, of sin, of hell, and of damnation. He gives him His Son because of his wicked, lost condition, a sinner born in sin, and the child of wrath— a sinner in whom sin and rebellion against God live and reign. The gracious God, the Father of mercy, takes such an one as this to make him His child by adoption, to be His heir, joint heir with Christ! He makes him a new creature; He gives him the earnest of the Spirit, by whom he lives, who unites him to Christ, making him a member of His body. He makes him one with Christ, joined to the Lord. Thus all who believe, receive the fulness of grace which is in Christ Jesus.

“The Holy Ghost unites them to the Saviour, to be one with Him forever—members of His body, even as before the world was made they were set apart in the counsels of God to be His own.

“Thus by God’s great power we are restored to a nobler state than that which Adam lost. Adam lost an earthly Paradise—we have a heavenly one. That was an earthly life— this is an incorruptible and spiritual life—a life we can never lose again. Whosoever believeth in God hath this everlasting life—has to do no longer with the things that are seen, but he knows the Father in the Son—he knows the wondrous, the endless love of God. Let us not, therefore, shrink from laying down this mortal life, for the honour of

our Father, for a witness to the holy gospel. For we have in exchange a life so much higher, so far more glorious, that thoughts cannot measure it.

“And oh! how bright, how blessed, how triumphant, how joyous, and how happy is the day that is coming. Then the Lord and Saviour, in His own body, that body in which He suffered so much for us, in which He was spat upon, beaten, scourged, and tortured, so that His face was marred more than any man—in that body He shall come, calling to all His own who have been partakers of His Spirit, in whom by the Spirit He has dwelt—calling them up to the glory—showing Himself to them in the body of His glory, raising them up in their bodies alive with immortal life, made like to Jesus, to reign forever with Him in joy.

“For that blessed day the whole creation groans—that day of the triumphant coming of our Saviour and Redeemer, when all enemies shall be put under His feet, and His elect people shall ascend to meet him in the air. And then shall be seen the power and the great glory of the Lord Jesus; Himself, His glorified body, the sign of the Son of Man which shall be seen in heaven. And as in the body of His glory there is no death, no weakness, so likewise in the bodies of His members will there be nothing to dim their perfection, they shall stand before the Father complete in Christ”

I have thought it well thus to tell you in Farel’s own words what was the gospel which he preached. Three hundred and fifty years have passed since then, and Bibles have been scattered far and wide. But can we say that there are many even now who believe as much of the record that God has given of His Son—who know by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, as William Farel did, not only how, but why, the sinner is saved! How many are there who may perhaps have passed from death to life, but who would think it even wrong to say they are certain that they are saved. And how few are there to

be found who know why they are saved! Let me ask you, do you know what is meant by those words of William Farel, “the Father, for the love of Himself, not for the love of us, saves us and gives to us eternal life”? If you do not yet understand those blessed words, let me entreat you to read the fifteenth chapter of the gospel of Luke, and ask of God to show you the hidden treasures, or rather the revealed treasures of love, in those words of Christ Revealed by God’s great love, but hidden from many thousands by the veil of unbelief which blinds their eyes. We read of a hidden gospel in the fourth chapter of the second book of Corinthians. But it is hidden to those whose eyes Satan has blinded—and if he cannot blind us wholly, he will at least seek to dim and cloud the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, which shines to us from the unveiled face of Christ. If he cannot blind our eyes to the kindness and pity of God, he will hide from us the love of God—he will keep out of our sight the marvellous truth, that it is for His own sake He has saved us, and given us a place in the glory. With joy and wonder did the people of Meaux hear of this love that passeth knowledge. The workmen in the woollen manufactories, the tradesmen, the peasants from the country round, filled the rooms or the churches where the gospel was preached. The bishop himself preached diligently. He told the people that these new doctrines were but the old truths which Christ and the apostles had preached. He entreated all who heard to believe them and hold them fast. “Yes,” he said, “whoever may oppose you—if I, your bishop, should prove false to Christ, and give up the truth I preach to you now, do not you follow me, the word of God cannot change; be faithful, if it be unto death.”

Besides preaching the gospel, Master Faber had been working hard at a translation of the four gospels into French. These were now published. The

bishop, we are told, spared neither gold nor silver in furnishing every one with copies of the word of God. The whole town began to read the gospels. On Sundays, and holidays, the people met in little parties to read and speak together of the glad tidings. The labourers carried gospels into the fields, and the artizans took them into the workshops, to spend any spare moments they might have over the word of God. They had a sufficient supply given them by the bishop to be able to scatter them amongst the haymakers and harvest people, who came at those times from more distant provinces. Thus the gospel was carried into towns and villages far away, where the good seed sprang up and brought forth fruit. The good fruit was soon seen in Meaux itself. Blasphemy, drunkenness, quarrelling, became, we are told, almost unknown. The praises of God, and holy conversation, were heard on every side. The bishop was not satisfied that the people of his own diocese alone should know the word of God. He sent the Epistles of Paul in French to the Princess Margaret, who was mourning his absence from Paris. He entreated her to show it to the king, her brother, and to her mother. It is probable that she did so; but alas! to their deeper condemnation.

Meanwhile, many of those who heard the good tidings at Meaux began themselves to speak of Christ and His great salvation to those around them. Four persons are specially to be remembered amongst these witnesses for Christ. One was a young student from Picardy, who had been invited by the bishop to stay for a while at Meaux. He is described as “a man of great sincerity and uprightness.” His name was James Pavanne. Then there were Peter and John Leclerc. These two young men were wool-carders. Their father was a bigoted papist, but their mother had believed the gospel. Fourthly, there was a poor man, whose name is now known to God alone. He is spoken of only as the “Hermit of Livry.” This man having been

anxious to save his soul by the “good works” of popery, had gone to live as a hermit in the forest of Livry, not far from Paris. He made his living by begging from door to door. But it so happened that one day he met with some men of Meaux, who had something better to bestow upon him than the bread that perisheth. The hermit went back to his cell that day a rich man. He still lived in the forest in his little hut, but he now went about not to beg, but freely to give that which he had freely received. He went from house to house, from village to village, to tell of the blessed Lord Jesus, of the complete forgiveness which God gives to all who believe in Him, a pardon bought by the blood of Christ. In time his little cell became a meeting place for many who felt the burden of their sins, and who went to ask the messenger of Christ what they were to do to be saved. You must remember these four servants of God. You will hear of them again. Thus, in the city of Meaux, from the bishop in his palace to the wool-carder in the factory, it would seem that Christ was owned. Perhaps, in the eyes of man, the bishop stood first, and the wool-carder last. But God seeth not as man seeth. He has said, “The last shall be first and the first last, for many be called, but few chosen.”

## Chapter 13

### THE PATH OF OBEDIENCE

**S**trange as it may seem, this time, when the gospel was so freely preached, so eagerly listened to, and by so many truly believed, was not, after all, a time of unmixed happiness to William Farel.

Master Faber was filled with joy and hope. “How deeply does my heart rejoice,” he said, “when I see the pure knowledge of Christ thus spreading abroad! I can hope that our dear France will at last know the grace of God, for does not our gracious king himself consent that his people should read the word of God in their own language? Now, in this diocese at least, the gospel is read on Sundays and saints’ days, and expounded daily to the people, and simple souls delight to feed upon the blessed word.”

So far, William Farel could share the joy of his old master. He could rejoice that the gospel was preached, and that souls were saved. But, what then? Could he shut his eyes to the sad truth, that after all the mass was said, and the images filled the churches, the bishop wore the gorgeous vestments which man had invented, and all around, on every side, were sights and sounds to remind him how men had added to the word of God,



and provoked him to anger with their own inventions! It was well that they should own Christ as the One Saviour, but were they owning Him as the One Lord? It was well the gospel was read on the saints' days, but why were there saints' days at all? Was Christ to be believed in by sinners, and not to be obeyed by saints?

William Farel was, therefore, not happy. And he was the more unhappy because nobody—at least no one who took a public part in preaching and teaching—saw these things as he did. Perhaps amongst the poor and unknown there were some who saw with him. From what followed it would appear that there were. But the bishop, and dear Master Faber, and Gerard and Arnold Roussel, must he break with them as to these matters, and own that even his old master was not following the Lord fully? They talked these things over together. We may gather from William Farel's words what was said on either side. "Do not let us deceive ourselves," he said, "thinking that we are doing right, when we are only following our own judgment. Let us follow neither our judgment, nor anything that is in ourselves, for the flesh is not changed, and we are not perfect. Let us look at the holy, pure, and perfect word of God, and ask help from our gracious Father to follow that. Let us beware of flattering ourselves with the thought that it is lawful to do what is right in our own eyes. For example, to conform to the ways of those with whom we live. I do not mean here a conformity of mind and of thought, but an outward conformity. Let us be careful not to conform outwardly in those things which concern the worship and service of God, when all is not done simply as God directs in His word. Do not let us say because such and such a thing is merely an outward form, it is a matter of indifference. If God has forbidden it, it is not a matter of indifference at all, and we are not to follow others in doing it. Do not say, I may kneel down

before an image, provided that in my heart I am not worshipping it. That I may use words because others use them, if they are dishonouring to God. That I may outwardly observe festivals invented by Satan, provided that my heart is not in it. God asks for the true obedience of the heart, but He desires also this obedience should be shown by the outward act, by doing only that which He commands, even if every person besides in the whole world should do the contrary. Thus for no reason whatever ought I to neglect to hear the word of God, or to eat the Lord's supper, or to cease to worship with the holy assembly of the Lord Jesus. If I am bound thus outwardly to do what God commands, I am equally bound to abstain from that which He has forbidden. I am not merely to make an open confession of Christ and His gospel; I am also to make an open renunciation of Anti-Christ, and of the assembly of Satan. And as far as I do not perform this promptly and openly, I ought to own before God that I have sinned, and ask His help that I may follow His holy commandments, with my soul, with my heart, with my mind, and with my body?

“But cannot it be right,” was the argument of Faber and the Roussels, “that men should order such outward forms as are for the honour of God, so that He may be served with more holiness and reverence than it would be otherwise?”

“The flesh,” said William Farel, “will sometimes openly blaspheme God. But it is also the flesh—the deceitful heart—that contrives and invents new ways of worshipping and serving God. The flesh is at the bottom of all that is added on to the word of God, that is not to be found therein. The flesh makes sects, and rules, and institutions, and is a liar and deceiver in all that it does, pretending that it is holiness, and the love of God that is the motive. It deceives us into really believing this; therefore we ought to be very

careful not to follow whatever professes to be of God, or seems to us to be of God. We must ‘try the spirits’ to know whether they are of God. For Satan can be transformed into an angel of light, and his ministers also, and more than all, the wisdom of the flesh. We ought, therefore, to prove everything by the holy word of God, and find out whether it is really from God, or from the flesh.”

“But if our intention is really good—if we are really sincere, does not that make the action pleasing to God?”

“Our intention!” answered William, “look at Peter, with his good intention, by reason of which the Lord called him Satan. Look at king Saul, and the other kings, who worshipped God in the high places, as the patriarchs had done. Was God pleased with them? Such good intentions are the wisdom and prudence of the flesh, which always desires to be uppermost, and to rule, order, and arrange everything, thus getting praise and glory to itself, and despising that in which it has no hand. The Spirit, on the contrary, will not do a single thing, except by the express commandment of God. The Spirit will not say, ‘Now that times are changed we must change our course.’ No, not if great signs and miracles were to be done to prove it. Not if every person in the world stood in opposition. The Spirit would hold fast, without stirring a hair’s breadth, to the pure word of God, the word that endureth forever. Let the world do as it likes, the Spirit will give this honour to God, who cannot lie, owning that all things that cannot be proved by His holy word are vanity and lies. “But it is much better,” adds William, “to know by experience and practice than by reading it in a book, not to contradict or quench the Spirit in our ways and doings.”

William Farel had soon to make full experience himself of what it was to go forward in the solitary path of obedience. It had been hard for him at

first to turn from the father and mother, the priests and the teachers, who had led him in the ways of idolatry. But it was far harder to turn away from Master Faber himself, who had been one of God's messengers to bring light and peace to his soul. But if God had spoken plainly, He must be obeyed at all costs. It is written, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His." Thus far Master Faber gladly admitted the truth. "Can I not be in Rome," he thought, "and not of it? The Lord knoweth, in the midst of the evil, how to distinguish His own." But William Farel remembered how this verse goes on; there is a second inscription on the seal of God. "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Not simply depart ourselves from a course of sin, but in this passage we are commanded further, and, specially, to depart from those who are "vessels to dishonour" in that which bears the name of the house of God, to break off all connection with that which is dishonouring to His holy name. If Master Faber had not the faith and courage thus to act, it was plain that he and William Farel could no longer walk in the same path—the holy path of separation from evil. William must go forward without him.

## *Chapter 14*

### THE DARK DAYS AT MEAUX

**I**n the meantime a storm was brewing. The Franciscan monks began to complain loudly of the new teaching. It was a sad time for them, when money was spent in gospels which might otherwise have found its way into their pockets. They went to the bishop, and besought him to put a stop to the heretical preaching. But the bishop stood firm. He preached from the cathedral pulpit that the monks were Pharisees and hypocrites, and that the new teachers were from God. The monks knew where to go for the help which the bishop refused. They appeared at Paris, and reported to Noel Bédlier that was going on at Meaux. Noel Bédlier heard with joy that his old enemy, the bishop, was now likely to bring down a terrible sentence upon his own head. He brought the matter before the parliament of Paris. He was all the more rejoiced at this opportunity of hindering the gospel, because he had just had a grievous disappointment in the case of Louis de Berquin. This young nobleman had, through his study of the Bible, been truly converted, not to Protestantism only, but to God. He had diligently employed himself in writing, translating, printing, and circulating gospel

tracts and books. The parliament, stirred up by Bédlier, had seized upon his books and papers, and put him into prison.

It was decided that he should be tried before the bishop of Paris as a heretic, and for this reason he was to be removed from the public prison to the bishop's house. But at this moment the royal guards appeared at the prison gate, bearing a letter from the king, commanding that Berquin was to be delivered up to him, not to the bishop. It would seem that the Princess Margaret had interceded for him. The parliament reluctantly gave up their prisoner, and contented themselves with burning his books in the place of Notre Dame. The king set Berquin at liberty, and he retired to his estate in Picardy.

You can well believe that Bédlier was now doubly anxious to lay hands upon a "Lutheran," and thus wreak his vengeance upon the bishop, since Berquin had escaped him. Backed by the whole of the Sorbonne, he soon succeeded in stirring up the parliament to inquire into the strange doings at Meaux. The bishop was speedily called to account for his evil deeds. He was accused, in the first place, of preaching heresy, and of aiding and abetting the chief heretics who had so long troubled the University of Paris; that he had himself invited them to Meaux, had helped them and encouraged them by his labours and his money; that he had even allowed young William Farel, who was not ordained at all, but was a pestilent heretical layman, to preach freely in the city of Meaux.

It must have been just at this point that William Farel left the old city. He must have had a sad parting with Master Faber, and with the little band of believers whom he was leaving behind; but the time was come when he must turn his back openly upon Rome, and upon those who, like his dear old master, still hung back from the great step of coming out to Christ only,

apart from all that man had invented. Where did William betake himself? We read in the history that God has written of His servants, of Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, who tracked the lion in the snow to the pit where it lay. In like manner, just now, when Bédlier had so nearly wreaked his vengeance upon Louis de Berquin, and had stirred up all Paris to the attack upon the bishop, it was to Paris that William Farel returned. He there spoke boldly and faithfully of Christ and His gospel. He openly denounced the wickedness and idolatry of Rome. But the door was shut. None would now receive the message. The wonderful thing is that none laid hands on him. We know not how this was, but we shall find it was often so in his remarkable history. Farel gave his last message to the Paris University, and he gave it to deaf ears. He then, for the last time, turned his back upon the great city, and returned by way of Metz to his old home at Les Farelles.

Meanwhile, what was happening to the bishop of Meaux? He listened with terror to the accusations and threats of the parliament and of the monks. He well knew how narrowly Master Faber had escaped being burnt alive. He could foresee the fate that was hanging over Louis de Berquin, should he again fall into the hands of Bédlier. What should he do? On the one hand disgrace and the stake, on the other hand his mitre and throne, the favour of the court and parliament, and the respect of all who owned the pope as their master! Should he deny Christ? Satan whispered to him that there was a middle course. He need not give up the gospel, but he might make an outward show of satisfying Rome. He might serve two masters. This he resolved to do. He said he would give up Luther's writings, and he would consent that the Virgin should be worshipped. "I can always tell people," he said to himself, "that it is through Christ alone she can have power to help." But would he give up his beloved friends, Master Faber and

the Roussels? Again Satan put into his heart the cowardly excuse, that were he to banish them from Meaux they would but carry the light elsewhere; he would thus be serving the cause of the gospel. Thus did a deceived heart turn aside this miserable man.

On the fifteenth of October, 1523, he published three commands. First, that prayer was to be made for the dead, and that the virgin and the saints were to be worshipped. Second, that no one was to buy, borrow, read, or possess Luther's writings; on the contrary, they were to be torn, scattered to the winds, or burnt. Third, that the doctrine of purgatory was to be taught. A month later he forbade the priests of Meaux to permit the "Lutherans" to preach. The gospel teachers were by this time called "Lutherans," though, as we have seen, Farel had known and believed the gospel more clearly than Luther had done, and had even preached against the errors held by Luther.

In the following January the bishop proclaimed that the images were to be held in veneration. The first president of the parliament and a councillor, called Verjus, went to Meaux to observe the bishop's proceedings. In their presence he had to preach in opposition to the new heresies. They returned to Paris fully satisfied with him, and the only punishment inflicted on him for his past offences was the payment of a heavy fine. Their next attack was upon Master Faber, who still remained at Meaux. But the king a second time stood up in his defence. He respected his learning, and despised the monks and doctors for the ignorance shown in their arguments against him. Therefore Master Faber was again left in peace. He could not preach publicly at Meaux, but he taught privately, and tried to make himself happy in the sight of many souls really turned to the Lord. But his conscience would sometimes reproach him when he thought of Louis de Berquin's



imprisonment, and of Farel, who had boldly disowned all fellowship with Rome. Still Master Faber was true to the faith he taught, and in contrast with the bishop, we may think of him as a faithful but weak servant of the Saviour whom he truly loved.

## *Chapter 15*

### “NO CERTAIN DWELLING-PLACE”

**W**e must now return to William Farel. It was with a feeling of terror that his family heard of his being on his homeward road. The tidings of his strange doings at Paris and at Meaux had reached them long before. And now he was once more amongst them in the old home. The great Alps, the deep green valleys, the mountain villages around him, as in old times. But to him all was changed. He could see in his beloved Dauphiné only the souls who were perishing in darkness, without the knowledge of Christ. As soon as he arrived, he gave to all around the blessed message with which God had sent him. As he had given it at Paris and at Meaux, so now he gave it at Les Farelles, at Gap, and at every village round. He preached in the streets and fields, in mills and farmyards, on the rocks by the river side, on the slopes of the mountains. Wherever two or three could be gathered to hear, he was there with his Bible and his voice of thunder, preaching and teaching Jesus Christ.

It was but a very little while before his brothers, Daniel, John James, Walter, and Claude, believed, and were saved. The priests arose in fury. A

young man, not a clergyman at all, thus to preach! To preach heresy, and to preach anywhere and everywhere! “He is neither a priest nor a monk,” said the bishop of Gap. He was summoned before the bishop and the magistrates of Gap, and banished from the district. But the word of the Lord could not be banished. Besides his four brothers, many appear at this time to have turned to the Lord. Amongst these there may have been a boy called Anthony Boyve, whose home was in Dauphiné.

Remember this boy Anthony: you will hear of him again\* There were some, too, who had already believed the blessed tidings before William Farel came. How was this? Not far from the castle of Les Farelles was the old castle of Chastelard. A family lived there of the name of Coct. The old lord of Chastelard had several sons. His second son, Anemond, was a knight, who seems to have travelled about, and in the course of his travels to have met with William Farel. Most likely they had known one another as boys, and had met again at Paris. From William Farel, Anemond had learnt to know the Lord Jesus Christ He had then returned into Dauphiné, where he had told the glad tidings to those around his home. Amongst those who believed was a priest of Grenoble, called Peter Sebville. This priest was already preaching the gospel with great power when William Farel arrived in Dauphine. We are told he was “a preacher of great eloquence, of an honest and good heart, not taking counsel with flesh and blood.” But the young knight, Anemond, was no longer there. Just about the time that William left Meaux, Anemond had gone to Wittemberg, in Germany, to make acquaintance with Luther. And from thence he had travelled to Zurich, in Switzerland, to see Zwingli.

Who was Zwingli? You have not heard of him before. I cannot now tell you the whole of his history, but will say, in few words, that he had been,

since the year 1518, the preacher in the cathedral of Zurich, in Switzerland. He had begun, like Luther in Germany, to understand that sinners are saved by the death of Christ; and having by degrees gained light from the Bible, he had spoken boldly against some of the evil teaching of popery. It would seem that he had at first opposed the popish teaching, not so much because it was contrary to the Bible, but because he thought it opposed to reason and good sense; and when he first was appointed preacher at Zurich, he does not appear to have himself passed from death to life, though he was already known as inclined to Protestantism. It is, alas! very easy to be a Protestant, and to see that popery is foolish, and even wrong, without having faith in Christ, or love to God. There were numbers of people at that time, and there are greater numbers now, who could argue to any extent against the errors of popery, but with hearts as far from God, and as much at enmity with Him, as the hearts of Leo X. and the most depraved of the monks.

It would seem, however, that a year later, in 1519, Zwingli was brought, through a dangerous illness, to come himself to Christ as the Saviour.

Just at the time when Farel left the city of Meaux, the news had been spread abroad that Zwingli had caused all the images and relics in the churches of Zurich, and of the surrounding villages, to be taken away and destroyed. He had, therefore, made one great step. But he was still singing mass, and observing other popish forms. This he did, not so much because he thought it right himself, but for fear of giving offence to the priests by leaving it off. He possessed much of a not uncommon quality, for which many people then, and many in later times, praised and admired him. They called it wisdom and moderation. Farel would have called it “the prudence of the flesh.” But whilst we can see now how Zwingli erred on the side of “fleshly prudence,” we can also observe that Farel was not always on his

guard against the zeal and energy of the flesh. In this respect Zwingli and Farel stood in contrast to one another. Zwingli was always, to a great extent, a popular man, as he was careful and skilful in not arousing men to anger. He acted cautiously and by degrees.

William Farel might sometimes have given less offence by learning more of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. At the same time, the blessing of Luke vi. 22 belonged rather to Farel than to Zwingli, "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of Man's sake." There has been but one Servant of God, who could be perfectly meek, and perfectly devoid of the fear of man, and of the wisdom and prudence of the flesh, as well as of the violence and hastiness of the flesh. We shall look in vain for another.

It would appear that Farel continued his preaching for some months with great diligence, amongst the mountain villages. He knew the rocks and caverns so well, and had so accustomed himself, when a boy, to climbing the mountains, that it was easy for him to find safe hiding-places. "The crosses, persecutions, and devices of Satan," he said, "of which I have been forewarned, have not been wanting; they are even much severer than I could have borne of myself. But God is my Father; He has provided, and always will provide me the strength which I require." It was a joy to the heart of Farel to see many sinners saved through the preaching of the word.

But Bedier and Duprat had not forgotten "that firebrand of discord," who had escaped them at Paris. They sent warnings to the bishop of Gap, and a search was made for the heretic preacher. William Farel was not to be found. He had meantime travelled westward, across the Cevennes mountains, and had reached the distant province of Guyenne. There he

preached for a short time. But the priests and monks were soon on the watch. Again Farel found himself pursued by a host of enemies, and again he escaped from their hands. His friend Anemond de Châtelard had written to him, entreating him to come to Switzerland. Under the sheltering care of God, he travelled on, hiding in woods and mountain clefts, till, in December, 1523, he reached the old city of Basle.

## Chapter 16

### THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD THAT IS WISER THAN MEN

**S**everal remarkable men were at that time living at Basle. This city, the chief university of Switzerland, was famous for its learning, and for the number of books which were then printed there. The man to whom all Europe looked up, as the head of the learned men of every country, the great Erasmus, had been living at Basle since the year 1514. A number of men, also famous for their learning, had flocked to Basle for the sake of Erasmus' company. No one seemed to know, for a long while, whether Erasmus took part with the gospel or against it. Zwingli had known him for some time, and admired him greatly. Erasmus praised and admired Zwingli in return. There was a preacher of the gospel at Basle who was also devoted to Erasmus. This man's name was Hausschein. He was a German from Franconia. He had been a monk, but had left his convent two years before. He had not, however, come out clearly from the church of Rome. He was much in the same path as Master Faber, at Meaux, but it was from want of light, not from want of courage. He was of a meek and gentle disposition, and at the same time he was an earnest preacher of the gospel, as far as he

knew it. He was curate of St Martin's Church at Basle, and his preaching was attended by immense crowds. Erasmus only half liked him, for in his heart he hated the truth, though convinced of it as far as reason could convince him. Those whose reason is convinced, but whose hearts are not converted, are the people who feel most enmity against God.

It was just at this time that Erasmus was beginning to show more openly on which side he stood. He had been provoked by a letter from Luther, who told him he had not courage to be on the Lord's side. He had also been earnestly entreated, just at this time, by the pope and by Henry VIII., king of England, to write in defence of popery against the Lutherans. It was then that Farel arrived at Basle. Hausschein gladly took him into his house, and gave him his little spare room. The Lord rewarded Hausschein for his love and hospitality. He was, just then, very much cast down, because though many came to listen, few seemed to care for the truth that he preached. He had written to Zwingli, "Alas, I speak in vain, and see not the least reason to hope. Perhaps amongst the Turks I should find more ears to hear—but, alas! I lay the blame on myself alone."

To this humble servant of God, Farel was sent with words of help and encouragement Hausschein was revived and cheered by the bright faith of his French brother, and from the first day of his arrival he loved him deeply and fervently. "Oh, my dear Farel," he said, "I hope that the Lord will make our friendship an everlasting one, and if we cannot live together down here, our joy will only be the greater when we shall be together at Christ's right hand in heaven!" Farel, too, was delighted to find how much love for the Lord filled the heart of Hausschein, and he was glad to know the friends of the good man who had been brought to know Christ, and were longing to know Him better. But he refused to go and see Erasmus. "No," he said, "he



shuts his door against God's saints. He is afraid of owning himself on the Lord's side. I do not wish to make his acquaintance."

It was in vain that Erasmus was praised by Hausschein, and by others, as learned in theology and wonderful in intellect. "The natural man," said Farel, "does not understand the things of God. The printer's wife knows more about them than he does. The truth is, he desires to stifle the gospel."

Farel was thought exclusive and narrow-minded by many; by Erasmus he was hated. Just as all the favour of the king could give no pleasure to Haman, as long as Mordecai the Jew refused to bow to him, so did all the homage of Europe fail to give enjoyment to Erasmus, whilst this young Frenchman, who was nobody at all, refused to own his superiority. Erasmus gladly seized upon this opportunity of proving himself a true churchman, by speaking his mind about Farel. He was very much afraid of being suspected to belong to the party of Reformers. He shrank from attacking Luther, but it was easy to vent his anger upon this wandering Frenchman. "I have never met with anything more false, more violent, more mischievous than this man," he said; "his heart is full of vanity, his tongue of malice." And, alas! do we not see our own natural hearts in the words that follow—"These Frenchmen had five phrases continually put into their mouths by Satan: Gospel, Word of God, Faith, Christ, Holy Ghost!" Such were to Erasmus, and such are to all of us who have not yet been born again, the five phrases we least love to hear! Well might the Lord speak those solemn words of condemnation and of grace, "Ye must be born again." What is the natural man, even with the mind and the knowledge of Erasmus? And well would it be if the same complaint could be made of us as of William Farel. Another accusation brought against him by Erasmus, was that he had given to this great scholar, who had all Europe at his feet, the name of Balaam. It would

seem that Farel had not called him Balaam. But it is very possible that he may have heard of his correspondence with Henry VIII., and may have thought and spoken of Balaam, who would, if he could, have cursed the people of God for the king's reward. Farel, however, in his letters, speaks of Erasmus without bitterness or abuse. Anemond arrived at Basle soon after Farel came there. There were many Frenchmen who had now taken refuge there, for the storm was breaking over the servants of Christ in France. Sad news came from Meaux. When William Farel had left the little flock, who chiefly through his preaching had been brought to God, they turned for help and teaching to the wool-carder, John Leclerc. John went from house to house speaking of Christ. But not content with this, he one day posted up on the cathedral door a placard, in which he boldly spoke of the pope as the Antichrist, whom the Lord will destroy with the breath of His mouth. We, who have had better opportunities of learning the Scriptures, are aware that the pope is not this Antichrist, that on the contrary, it is the person called the "man of sin," working in connection with the "false prophet," the Antichrist, who will at last destroy popery from the face of the earth.

Thus God uses the wicked to punish the wicked, as in the case of Jehu and the house of Ahab. Still, it is no doubt right to reckon the pope amongst "the many Antichrists" of whom the apostle John speaks. The Franciscan monks rose in a body when this insult was offered to the pope. John Leclerc was at once imprisoned. He was tried, under the eyes of the wretched bishop, and condemned to be whipped for three days through the city, and on the third day to be branded on the forehead as a heretic. This sentence was carried out. An immense crowd assembled to see the punishment of Leclerc. On the third day the hangman, with a red hot iron, marked him on the forehead. A voice arose amidst the crowd, "Glory be to Jesus Christ and

to His witnesses!” It was the voice of John’s mother. The monks and the officers were awe-struck. None dared to touch her, and she walked home through the crowd, who fell back on each side as she passed. John was now set at liberty, and went to live at Metz. His brother Peter continued to labour in making the gospel known at Meaux. John was equally busy at Metz. He continued to work at his trade, and in his spare hours to preach and teach Jesus Christ. Another of the little flock at Meaux had also been seized, and was now in prison. It was young James Pavanne.

Farel had not been long at Basle when he asked leave to propose some questions for the consideration of the University. The matter he chiefly wished to put before them was this, “The Word of God is enough? The University refused to allow this discussion. Farel then asked leave of the Town Council to put forward this subject in a public meeting. The Council published a notice that he was to do so. This notice was a remarkable one. “It has just happened,” wrote the Council, “that by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, as we are allowed to suppose, a Christian, a brother, named William Farel, has humbly requested to be permitted to propose some questions for a public discussion in the college. His object was rather to be reproved if he is in error, and to receive instruction, than to set himself up as a teacher of others. Now, in spite of his good intentions, and his Christian behaviour, his request has been refused point blank, and therefore he appeals to us as to the superior authority. And we, having found that the matters proposed for discussion are in conformity with the gospel, and useful rather than hurtful to men, have given our authority to the said William to hold a dispute on the said matters, that our pastors may profit thereby.” The Council further decreed that any person, high or low, who should hinder any from attending the meeting, should be forbidden the use

of the public mills, ovens, and markets, and that if any holding benefices should refuse to be present, or hinder others, they should be deprived of the said benefices. A large multitude were thus assembled. Erasmus himself was present.

Farel then put forward thirteen articles. The first was, “Christ has given us the most perfect rule of life, to which we can add nothing, from which we must take away nothing.” The second declared that it was an ungodly thing to belong to any party or faction, or to frame other directions for our conduct than those contained in the words of Christ. The third, that all distinctions of dress or food, all forms and ceremonies, are Jewish and contrary to gospel light. In another article he says that a Christian teacher should give himself up entirely to the study and teaching of the Word. In another, that to say the directions given by Christ are merely “expedient,” not binding, or on the other hand to say anything is binding because we think it expedient, is the teaching of Satan. In another, that to seek to save or justify ourselves by our own strength and our own merit is putting ourselves in the place of God. In another, that as to the worship of God we are to abstain from idolatry, and from all that does not proceed from the Holy Ghost.

The words of the last article are, “Our pole-star is Jesus Christ. By His power all things are to be ruled—no other star is to be put in His place. That this should be done henceforward, we may hope when we see all things restored to the primitive order of the gospel, and all strife between Christians laid aside, the peace of God ruling in their hearts.”

Farel then began his address with these words, “I am persuaded that every Christian man has nothing better to do than diligently to seek the truth, that truth of which Christ spoke when He said, ‘I am the truth.’” He proceeded

to entreat all who called themselves pastors and teachers to look into their own belief, and see if it would bear the light of that truth. “Let it be brought forth into the light,” he said, “and compared with the Word of God. To this I exhort you, I entreat you, for the sake of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, who has so solemnly commended to us the care of one another.”

When Farel had spoken, an answer was expected from the priests, but not one came forward. Hausschein stood up boldly with Farel and challenged them to appear. But in vain—all were silent. Those who loved the gospel in Basle praised and thanked God for this meeting. “Farel is strong enough,” they said, “to destroy the whole Sorbonne single handed.” “Much good,” we are told, “came of this meeting.” Farel was strong in the power of the Holy Ghost.

It was a simple message which he had to deliver, “The Word of God is enough.” But these six words, believed and acted upon, would have destroyed not the Sorbonne only, but the whole great pile of corrupt Christianity. Not popery only—but how much besides! Were these words now believed by all who profess and call themselves Christians, not only would there be no popery, but there would no longer be the three hundred sects of Protestantism. We often read in books, “The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants.” Would that it were so! Is it true that Protestants have nothing but the Bible to show as the rule of their faith and practice? Alas, just as we read of Abijah, king of Judah, that he boasted of his religion before the army of Jeroboam, so, too often, have Protestants boasted themselves before the papists. “As for us,” Abijah said, “the Lord is our God, and we have not forsaken Him.” Yet when we look in the book of Kings we find that this same Abijah walked in all the sins of his father—and what were they? They were the same sins as those for which he blamed

the people of Israel—he, too, had “high places, and images, and groves on every high hill, and under every green tree.” As long as Protestants have amongst them the inventions of men, which divide them into sects and parties, which grieve and hinder the Spirit, and cloud and dim the blessed work and person of the Lord Jesus Christ, their right place is that of humbling themselves before God, rather than of boasting before men. The Protestant men or women who say, “I can’t say I am saved, but I am doing my best, and hope I shall be some day,” are speaking the language of Rome as much as the monk or nun whom they pity as poor misguided papists. They, too, have added to the blessed gospel, “salvation is for me if I do my best to deserve it.” And how much have they not added besides that!

## *Chapter 17*

### “BLESSED ARE YE WHEN MEN SHALL HATE YOU”

**I**n the spring of the year 1524 Farel left Basle to visit Zwingli, and other preachers of the gospel in German Switzerland. He was absent but a little while, but during that time his enemies at Basle made the most of their opportunity to stir up the city against him. At the head of these enemies was Erasmus. The name of Balaam stung his guilty conscience. Farel had neither sought him nor avoided him. Had he done either, Erasmus would have been better pleased. “I am only sorry,” he said, “that I ever wasted a word in disputing with him. He would have thought me a shining light, if I would have said the pope is an Antichrist, and human ordinances are heretical, and forms and ceremonies heathenish abominations. He calls himself a friend of the gospel, but I never beheld such a proud, censorious, insolent man. I have learnt his character so well that I consider him neither worthy of being my friend nor my enemy.” Erasmus did, however, so far consider Farel worthy of being his enemy, that he succeeded in persuading the governors of the city that dangerous tumults would be caused if they allowed such a heretic to remain. The Council had hitherto not only allowed

Farel to preach, but they had desired him to do so “for the glory of Christ.” They had even given up to him one of the churches of the city. But when he came home from his visit to Zurich, he found that times were changed. “The Sunday was at hand,” he writes, “when I was to preach my fourth sermon. On the Saturday, at ten o’clock, a public messenger came to summon me. Having a good conscience, I made the best of my way to the town hall, so that the messenger could hardly keep pace with me. I was kept a considerable time waiting at the door. At last a magistrate called me in. As he could neither understand my language nor make himself understood by me,” (many persons at Basle speak German), “he led me into an ante-chamber, and there he endeavoured to talk to me in Latin, saying, ‘We see now what your gospel is.’ I, knowing that he meant to accuse the gospel of being sedition, replied to him, saying, ‘The gospel is not what you imagine. It teaches peace, it is ready to give, it asks for nothing again. It teaches us to suffer meekly for Christ’s sake.’ ‘We see it in another light,’ said he. ‘My masters desire that you leave the town this very day.’ I answered, ‘I have no wish to remain in the town against the will of your masters. But I want to know what crime I have committed, or what harm I have done. I am ready to give satisfaction to any I have injured, and if I have deserved death, I do not refuse to die.’ He replied, ‘My masters wish you to leave, and also to bind yourself not to take any revenge upon the town, or upon any citizen, and not to defame the town by your letters.’ Now I was already bound not to do these things, inasmuch as I was a Christian, for we hate sin, not men. We would make war upon their vices, but do good to themselves. However, lest I should stumble him by refusing thus to bind myself, I did so, and I obeyed my orders without delay. And the Lord knows I never left any town with greater joy, which was a surprise to me, as I had there so many friends



and brethren. But to tell the truth, when I had walked a mile, I began to think, ‘What is the cause of my having had to leave the town so suddenly?’ and I felt surprised when I thought over the matter. ‘How!’ I said to myself, ‘a Council so enlightened and so just, have they really condemned me without having heard my defence? And what crime have I committed? Why did they not accuse me of anything, so that if I deserved punishment others might take warning, and not commit the same offence? If I am not told why I am punished, how am I to be reformed by the punishment? And how are others to take warning by my fate, when my crime is unknown to them likewise?’”

Thus was Farel driven forth from the learned city of Basle.

His departure was a great sorrow to many in the town, who had learnt from him the blessed gospel of God. Hausschein was indignant. He missed his beloved friend, and he grieved that they should no more hear from him the truth the Lord had so wonderfully taught him. Farel took a knight called Esch as his companion, and went to Strasburg. The Lord had been working in a remarkable manner in that city. Farel was strengthened and encouraged by the warm welcome he received there. It was like the visit to Gaius’ house, of which we read in the “Pilgrim’s Progress”—a rest and refreshment by the way.

And now Farel was to enter upon fresh labours. Though he had preached at Meaux, and in Guyenne, and in Dauphiné, it would seem as though he had never regarded himself as specially called by God to give himself up to the preaching of the gospel, till he went to Basle. He says he had held back from taking the place of an evangelist, hoping that God would send forth more worthy and gifted men. But his talks with Hausschein on this subject had led him to the conviction that God had meant him to go forth as a

preacher wherever a door should be opened. “Hauschein,” he says, “frequently exhorted me to preach, calling upon the name of the Lord.” In other words, “commending him to the Lord in prayer.”

Some, who think it a terrible thing for men to preach who have not been ordained, have called this Farel’s ordination. It would be well if all Christian men, and women too, were thus to “ordain” one another, and that frequently, as we each one, if believers in the Lord Jesus, have our special work given to us by Him, and we each need the prayers of our brethren, and of our sisters. We should commend one another to the Lord, and provoke one another to love and to good works, after the example of Hauschein, whenever we have the opportunity of doing so. Other historians imagine, though without any record or tradition to build upon, that Farel must have been ordained at Strasburg. We find however, later, that when he met with believers at Montbéliard to break bread in remembrance of the Lord’s death, some even of his friends were displeased, because he was only a layman. A “sacrament” without a clergyman was strange, and even wrong, in the eyes of those who had been brought up in popish thoughts of priests and consecrations. And how slow even now are many of God’s people to receive His word in all its simplicity!

“For,” as Farel says, “instead of looking to God and His word, we are apt to look to ourselves, and our reason, and that which suits our own judgment appears to us to be more for edification, for (as it would seem) we see better what serves to edification than God Himself does, and according to our notions, everything would be ruined, if the ordinances of God were observed without any addition on our part, but our prudence, beyond that of God, will build things up. But let us not be so mad and so foolish, so arrogant, and so presumptuous, as to think we can render the Word of God

and His holy sacraments more worthy, and more sightly, and more full of grace and power, by anything we can add to them, or by anything we can do, for in fact we can do nothing, if we put our hand to it, but spoil and pervert everything by our own inventions.” It is worth remarking, also, that when Farel tells us how he came to write books, he gives the same explanation of that matter also. “John Hausschein,” he says, “at the request of some good people, admonished me to write in the vulgar tongue, that those might learn who do not know Latin. However, considering my littleness, I should never have attempted to write, nor should I have thought of doing so. But this holy man stirred me up to it, calling upon the name of the Lord, and according to God I obeyed,” If, therefore Farel was “ordained” once by Hausschein, we may also say he was ordained twice, once to preach and once to write books.

To return to our history, Farel, who now felt that the Lord Himself had called him to be a preacher, was ready to obey. The people of Montbéliard, who had heard of him, desired him to come amongst them. Their prince, the young duke Ulric of Wurtemberg, also consented to Farel’s preaching the gospel freely at Montbéliard. The Lord had set before him an open door, and thus we find that in July, 1524, Farel left Strasburg, and entered on his new field of labour.

## Chapter 18

### A DARK YEAR IN FRANCE

**M**ontbéliard is a little town, now belonging to France, but at that time to the German Empire. A pretty little town in the valley of the Allan, now chiefly inhabited by watchmakers and cotton manufacturers. There is an old castle on a high hill, with ancient round towers, and a bridge across the river below.

Farel was soon busily employed He preached constantly. He also worked hard at the translation of German tracts into French, and himself wrote French tracts, which were all printed together at Basle. Anemond helped him eagerly in this work. Master Faber had by this time finished his translation of the whole of the New Testament into French. Anemond managed to get one of these Testaments, and had a great many printed from it, at the press at Basle. As neither Farel nor Anemond had any money of their own, all the expenses were paid by the Lord's people at Metz, at Grenoble, and at Lyons. There were now many believers at Lyons, for the seed sown in Dauphiné had sprung up, and preachers of the gospel had gone forth to other places. There was just then a reason why several went to

Lyons. The king, Francis I., had started for his Italian wars. His mother and sister had gone with him as far as Lyons, and there they remained for a while. This was in August, 1524. Margaret had brought no attendants except those who believed the gospel. She was anxious that the Word of God should be preached at Lyons. And thus several preachers, who were persecuted elsewhere, took refuge there. Many believed the glad tidings, amongst them some of the rich merchants, who gladly sent money to Farel and Anemond to help on the work of printing. The two friends were a great help to one another. Anemond went backwards and forwards between Basle and Montbéliard, and kept William well supplied with tracts and books. These were given to colporteurs, men who carried them about in packs into the towns and villages of France, where they sold them cheaply. Thus, where preachers were banished, the Word of God still had free course, and this seed, sown far and wide, sprang up and brought forth fruit. All over France, in a little while, there were men and women who believed in the Lord Jesus, and turned from their idols to the one living and true God.

But the young knight's work was done. Anemond was suddenly taken ill at Schaffhausen, from drinking cold water when he was overheated. He knew he was dying, and sent off his servant to tell William Farel. Up to the last he had been diligently employed in printing and sending into France Testaments and tracts. William set off to see him, but arrived too late. Anemond's loss was a very bitter sorrow to him, and he grieved deeply also at the loss the people of God would suffer, now that so faithful a servant had been called home. Young Laurence de Châtelard, Anemond's brother, had believed the gospel. He was very grateful to William for having been such a devoted friend to his beloved Anemond.

Farel's preaching was heard with great joy by many of the people of Montbéliard. A great number seem to have been converted. Hausschein was delighted with the news that God was thus owning and blessing his dear friend. But he was always frightened when he thought of Farel, much as he loved him. He was afraid that he would rouse people to anger by his strong language. He entreated him again and again to be meek and gentle, to lead people, not to drive them—not to speak severely of the mass priests.

“Remember,” he said, “they are often people who know no better. They are ignorant and superstitious, and really think they are doing right. Be kind to them, and try to win them over by persuasion. Do not speak against the mass till you have first preached Antichrist out of their hearts.”

Farel did endeavour to be meek and gentle, but at the same time he did not hesitate to say that the mass was idolatry. He preached Christ boldly and faithfully. Very soon a disturbance arose. A monk and a priest stood up in the church where he was preaching, and interrupted the sermon by calling him a liar and a heretic. The duke arrested the priest and the monk, and ordered them to make no further disturbance, under penalty of his severe displeasure. The monk, however, again interrupted the sermon in the afternoon, and endeavoured to raise a riot. The duke then arrested both the monk and Farel. He told the monk he would give him his choice—either to prove from the Bible that what Farel had said was false, or if he could not do that, to confess that it was true. The monk having duly considered the matter, said he could not contradict Farel from the Bible, and would therefore own that he had spoken in anger and ill-temper, without any reasonable ground for what he had said. The duke desired him to write his confession, that it might be read publicly. The honest monk did so, and both were then dismissed.

The preaching was now listened to more eagerly than before, and Farel found his time fully taken up, for those who were converted wished to be further taught, and desired that their children should be taught too. Thus matters proceeded for about nine months, but the New Year 1525 was to be a dark year for the believers in and near France. Early in that year the French king, Francis I., was taken prisoner by the Emperor Charles V., at the battle of Pavia. During the year that the king's captivity lasted, the government was placed in the hands of his wicked mother, Louise of Savoy. You remember Louise and Chancellor Duprat as two bitter enemies of the gospel. The time was now come when they had it all their own way. A terrible persecution of the Lord's people immediately began in every part of France where believers were to be found.

Bedier and the doctors of the Sorbonne were now free to breathe out threatenings and slaughter against all who had received the gospel.

"Let us banish from France," said Bedier, "this hateful doctrine. This neglect of good works is a fatal delusion from the devil."

And to set the example of good works, did Bedier proceed to hunt out from every corner of Paris, Meaux, Lyons, or wherever else the Word of God had been preached, all those who had believed it.

The first attack was made upon Briçonnet. After his terrible denial of his Lord, this poor man had again ventured to preach Christ. He had again gathered round him some of the gospel preachers; he had even made a tour round his diocese in company with Master Faber, and had spent three months in clearing out the images from all the churches; he had burnt them one and all, the crucifixes only excepted. Briçonnet was, therefore, seized. He requested to be tried before the Parliament, but this favour was refused him. Bedier was afraid he would have too much to say for himself. He was,

therefore examined privately by two councillors, who were desired to get him, if possible, to deny his faith. Bedier judged rightly that his martyrdom might bring honour to the gospel, but that his denial of it would only bring disgrace upon the faith he had professed. A second time was the poor bishop called upon to decide between Christ and Satan; a second time he made the awful choice of giving up his Lord. He consented to do penance for his past errors—he publicly condemned Luther’s books—he gave orders that the saints were to be worshipped as before—and he headed a pompous procession to testify his faith in popery. Thus Briçonnet fell to rise no more. He lived eight years after this denial of the Lord whom he had owned and preached. In his will he commended his soul to the Virgin Mary, and to the “heavenly choir of paradise,” and desired that twelve hundred masses should be said for him after his death.

Master Faber was the next victim. He was the man who was specially hateful to Bedier, for he looked upon him as the author of all the mischief.

“Faber,” said Bedier, “tells us that whoever seeks to save himself will perish, while the man that lays aside all strength of his own, and throws himself entirely into the arms of Jesus, will be saved! What a hellish error! What a deceitful snare of the devil! Let us oppose it with all our might.” Alas, how many Bedier still remain! You, perhaps, and I have been Bedier too. It is through God’s mercy if we are not so now. We may not dare to use his words, but have we never thought his thoughts, and have felt dislike, contempt—God might say hatred—to those who trust in Christ alone?

The Parliament, later in the year, drew up an accusation against Master Faber, but, when he was sought for, he was not to be found. The old doctor had left Meaux secretly, and was gone. We shall hear of him again by-and-by.



Bédier now turned with all the rage of disappointment to Louis Berquin. He was a second time seized, and cast into prison.

“He shall not escape us,” said the Parliament.

The next object of Bédier’s fury was Erasmus. This was not because Erasmus was a teacher of the gospel; on the contrary, he had just been writing against Luther and the Lutherans. But Bédier knew that Erasmus despised him, and the priests and monks in general, for their ignorance, their stupidity, and their hypocrisy. Besides, he had helped on the cause of the gospel without intending it, by encouraging the study of Greek, and therefore, of the New Testament. He had translated it also. He had on the whole done much more to help than to hinder the new doctrines.

“Erasmus must, therefore,” said Bédier, “be crushed speedily.”

But Erasmus appealed for protection to the Emperor Charles V. This plan succeeded, and another victim escaped from the clutches of the Sorbonne.

One of the next who was seized was a preacher of the gospel near the town of Nancy, in Lorraine. His name was Schuch. Lorraine was then in the possession of a duke called Anthony the Good. But Anthony’s goodness began and ended with repeating the Lord’s Prayer and the Ave Maria on all suitable, or rather, unsuitable occasions; when not so employed, he was either indulging in vice, or persecuting the people of God. He and his confessor, Friar Bonaventura, seized upon Schuch, who was brought before the duke for trial. The trial was in Latin, which Anthony did not understand, but he was provoked at seeing Schuch look so calm and happy, and, thinking the examination had lasted long enough he stood up and condemned Schuch to be burnt alive.

Schuch looked at him, and quietly replied, “I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord.”

It was in August, 1525, that Schuch was burnt at Nancy; his Bible was burnt also. There were yet other victims upon whom Bédier had his eye.

The next who was seized was the young student James Pavanne. You remember that in the happy days of Meaux, he had been invited by Briçonnet to help in the gospel work with Master Faber and Farel. When Briçonnet had the first time turned from Christ, Pavanne had been seized by the Sorbonne, and imprisoned. This was at the end of 1524. The poor boy, alone in his prison, felt his courage give way, he consented to go back into popery, and he was released; but from that moment he was utterly miserable. We are told he spent his time in weeping. He now came forward and said he had sinned against his Lord, and desired to be counted amongst those who trusted in Christ alone. He did not, he said, believe in purgatory; he could not pray to the saints; he would own Christ as his Saviour, and Christ only. He was taken to the Place de Gréve, at Paris, there to be burnt. His sadness and fear were gone; he walked to the stake, looking bright and joyful; he preached boldly during the few minutes that remained, and so great was the power of that little sermon, that one of the priests said, "I would rather the Church had paid a million gold pieces, than that Pavanne should have spoken as he did."

The burning of Pavanne was soon followed by another glorious testimony to Christ. The poor hermit of the forest of Livry was dragged into the city of Paris, to be burnt by a stow fire in front of the cathedral of Notre Dame. The whole city crowded to the place of execution. The hermit was calm and firm. The priests pressed around him, holding a crucifix before his eyes, and the doctors of the Sorbonne cried aloud, "He is damned! he is going into hell fire!"

The hermit only replied that his trust was in Christ, and he was resolved to die believing in Him only as his Saviour.

## Chapter 19

### AN IDOL DROWNED, AND A SAINT BURNT

All this, and much more of martyrdom, and persecution, was happening in France during the year 1525. Meanwhile, for the first three months of that sad year, William Farel, in the little town of Montbéliard, had been preaching and teaching unharmed. But though none were allowed to seize upon him, the zeal of the priests was none the less. They did their best to hinder and oppose, and to keep up the idolatrous worship where worshippers could be found. The popish cantons of Switzerland also sent messages to Duke Ulric, entreating him to banish the heretic who was disturbing the peace of the Church. The duke was unwilling to do so. And so the early spring of 1525 passed away, and Farel preached on.

It happened one day, probably about March, 1525, that the priests of Montbéliard made a procession in honour of St. Anthony. Two priests went first, carrying the image of the saint; behind walked other priests in gorgeous dresses, choristers, girls and boys in various colours, carrying banners, candles, and flowers. As they crossed the bridge of the Allan a

man stood before them. That red beard and those flashing eyes were well known in the little town. He stepped forward, took the image from the shoulders of the priests, and hurled it over the bridge into the river below. "Poor idolaters!" he said, "will you never turn from your idols?"

The priests and the people stood dumb with consternation, but after a few moments they made a rush upon Farel. At that minute a cry was raised that a whirlpool had appeared in the river, and the image was drowning. All eyes were directed to the rushing water. When again they turned to seize Farel, he was gone. He had walked away, none having laid hands upon him. The violence of the priests, and of the messengers from the Swiss cantons seems, after this, to have had some effect upon Duke Ulric.

Farel was soon after driven from Montbéliard. The duke, though he consented to his banishment, remained his friend. The priests had power enough to raise a strong party against the gospel. The gospel, however, could not be banished, though Farel could be. To this day popery has never been able to regain possession of Montbéliard. Farel seems first to have gone back to Basle to see his friend Hausschein, but he was not allowed to remain there.

We next hear of him in the chronicles of the City of Metz. Since the beginning of the year, the servants of God had been terribly persecuted in that city. In January, a faithful preacher of the gospel, named Châtelain, had been seized by the Cardinal of Lorraine. He had been a priest and a monk, and had not yet cast off the dress which he had then worn. He was first stripped of these "holy garments," as they were called. His fingers were then scraped with a piece of glass, "that he might no longer have the power to sacrifice, consecrate, and bless, which he had received by the anointing of hands." He was then burnt in the streets of Metz. And now, in June,

1525, the old chronicle relates as follows: “About the time of the Feast of St. Barnabas, there returned a very fine young canon of the Cathedral of Metz, named Master Peter, and he brought with him a great doctor deeply learned in science, named Master William, who held to the teaching of Luther.” (This we know was not exactly the case.) The chronicle proceeds to say that Master Peter demanded a hearing for himself and for Master William, but could not obtain his request. On the contrary, he found that he and his friend were in danger of being seized and imprisoned forthwith. Therefore, “A few days before St. John’s Day, they quickly departed from Metz, and galloped their horses all night, for fear of being taken.” I should tell you that Master Peter, whose surname was Toussaint, had for some short time back believed the gospel We are not told by what means he was converted: probably through the preaching of our old friend, John Leclerc (who was, you remember, at Metz), and of the martyr Châtelain. And it may interest you to know that on the Sunday which Farel spent at Metz, he dined with his friend the knight, Nicholas d’Esch, who also invited Master Peter and the good wool-carder, John Leclerc. It is pleasant to think of that little party, who were never altogether again upon earth, but have long been together in the presence of the Lord. William now returned to his kind friends at Strasbourg.

He had been there but a few weeks when terrible news was brought from the city of Metz. John Leclerc, in spite of threats and persecutions, had continued to preach the gospel Many, through his means, appear to have been saved, and, in spite of priests and monks, the work of God had been carried on with wonderful power and blessing.

But a great holiday of the Papists was at hand. Every year, on a certain day, the people of Metz made a pilgrimage to a chapel about three miles

from the town. This chapel contained images of the Virgin, and of the chief saints of the country. The people believed that by worshipping there on this festival they gained a pardon for their sins. The evening before this great day a man came silently into the chapel in the dusk. It was John Leclerc. He had been pondering over the words of the Scripture, “Ye shall destroy their altars and break down their images.” He was filled with shame and grief and horror, at the thought that the next day the multitudes who called themselves by the name of Christ, from all the country round, would be falling down before these idols of wood and stone. He believed that God had spoken to him in those words of the law. He took down the images, one and all. He broke them into small pieces, and scattered them before the altar. He was all night in the chapel, thus employed. At daybreak he returned to Metz. In the morning the great procession started, with banners, drums, and trumpets; priests in their gorgeous dresses, monks and guilds, crosses and bells. The priests went first into the chapel, and came out with horror-stricken faces to tell the awful sight they had beheld. No one doubted that Leclerc had been the criminal. Some persons had seen him, in the early morning, coming into the town. He was at once seized. He made no secret of what he had done. He said, “I did it, that you might worship God alone.” He was taken before the judges, to whom he said, “Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh. God only is to be adored.” He was sentenced to be burnt alive. To add to this punishment, his flesh was first to be torn off with red-hot pincers. Leclerc was unmoved. He was carried to the place of execution. His right hand was first cut off. I will not describe to you the awful tortures which followed. It must have been a work of hours. The monks surrounded him with yells of fury. And meanwhile Leclerc, with a loud and solemn voice, repeated the words of God—” Their idols are silver

and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not They have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not They have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not, neither speak they through their throat They that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth in them.” Such was the last sermon of John Leclerc, preached in the slow fire in the streets of Metz.

William Farel's heart was filled with grief and thankfulness when this sad but glorious news was brought to Strasbourg— grief for the sufferings of God's dear servant, and thankfulness that he, as well as Châtelain, had been found faithful when tried in the fire of persecution.



## Chapter 20

### HAPPY FELLOWSHIP; AND ALONE WITH CHRIST

**T**his great sorrow was followed by a great joy. When October came, there arrived at Strasbourg no other than dear Master Faber himself! Gerard Roussel came with him, and other French friends who had fled likewise from the persecutions of Louise, Duprat, and Bedier. A good man, named Capito — who might have been called, like Gaius, the host of the whole Church—took them all, and others also, to live in his house. What a happy party it must have been! Master Faber was at first afraid to be known in the town, and therefore he took the name of Anthony Pilgrim, and Gerard Roussel took the name of Solnin but the old man was soon known by everyone, old and young, and even the children bowed respectfully when they met him in the street. He was cheered and delighted to find that the gospel he had first preached at Paris—when there were none who believed it—was now preached freely in the churches at Strasbourg; and of readings, prayer meetings, and godly converse there were enough to last from morning to night. The old doctor was lost in wonder, love, and praise. He encouraged his dear William to go on preaching boldly, but he could not

himself cast off all his fears and his “prudence of the flesh;” or, rather, he had not the faith to do it. “We can do all things through Christ, who strengthens us.”

William was much better pleased to see his old master an outcast and an exile, than to think of him working hand in hand with the Bishop of Meaux. At Strasbourg, at least, Master Faber could stand aloof from priests and masses; but like the hare that returns to the field from which it has been hunted, Master Faber was ready to go back to his old path when it was no longer dangerous to do so. William had not been hunted forth. When the Lord brings His people out of evil, “with a high hand brings He them out of it” But it may be that William had grace and patience to bear with the infirmities of his master, while others could only blame him. Young Peter Toussaint, who often took upon himself to advise and lecture Farel, was very much disgusted with Master Faber.

“He is utterly devoid of energy,” he said; “let him wait, and temporize, and dissimulate as long as he pleases, he will never be able to separate the offence of the cross from the preaching of the gospel.” This was very true, but it is true also that the Lord commanded Timothy not to rebuke an elder, and it is a bad sign when a young believer thus cries down an old one, especially for infirmities and timidity. Like Peter, who said, “Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee in any wise,” this other Peter, in later years, was himself tempted to deny the Lord; and in his case it was want of heart, not want of courage, which made him yield, in a great measure, to the temptation. Master Faber was, no doubt, happier at Strasbourg than ever before or after. He delighted in the company of so many earnest believers. Sometimes he wished that many more would come

to the Bible-readings to learn the blessed truth in which he found such joy and peace.

“It is sad we are so few,” he said.

“Do not mind that,” answered William; “numbers are no proof of God’s favour. The devil will always have more scholars than the Lord Jesus.” Thus the peaceful days at Strasbourg passed in Christian fellowship, in reading and preaching the word, and in prayer.

But bright days and dark days come alike to an end. The year 1526 was to bring many changes to the subjects of Francis I. Early in that year the king was set free from his imprisonment in Spain. He returned to France, to the great joy of his sister Margaret Not only for his sake and for her own, but for the sake of God’s persecuted people, did Margaret rejoice. Though Francis cared as little for God and for His people, as his mother did, yet for Margaret’s sake he would be willing to put a stop to the persecutions of those whom she loved. The parliament had made haste to sentence Louis Berquin to be burnt unless he would say that he had been in error; but the king at once commanded that Berquin should be released from his prison.

One by one the banished preachers were called back to France by the Princess Margaret. Messages came to Strasbourg—to Master Faber, to Gerard Roussel, to all, except only William Farel. The princess would have them all come back and place themselves under her care, all but Farel only; for all the rest were willing to own fellowship with the Church of Rome, though they meant to preach the gospel at the same time. This was just the course that Margaret approved. She liked to hear the gospel, but she did not like the offence of the Cross. One by one the French preachers left Strasbourg. William saw them go with longing eyes. He too would have gone, heart and soul, to carry back the glad tidings to his beloved France,

but dear as was France to his heart, Christ was dearer; and if he were to go back at the cost of giving up the path of separation from evil, rather would he never see France again. So Farel stayed behind, and waited for the Lord to show him where he should go, and what he should do. It was a solemn moment in his history. Perhaps never before had he been so sorely tempted to turn aside from the straight path of simple obedience to God. On the one hand there was France with her perishing millions, and not only might he safely return there, but live under Margaret's protection in peace, and even in honour. He might preach the glad tidings to his beloved countrymen, with Margaret's full approval. And all this if only he would outwardly conform to the services and ceremonies, which, after all, Master Faber would say, "are out outside things; and who can say," Master Faber would add, "how soon all those may be reformed, if only we preach the gospel of Christ, and wait for the result. We must endeavour to cleanse the house of God, not to destroy it." All this William well considered, and there were moments when it sounded well, and the way to France seemed to open before him as if it were the path in which God would have him go. Then, on the other hand, the weary waiting in a strange land, where he could not preach, because he did not know the language, and where he seemed to be of no use, though he was longing to tell the glad tidings far and wide. Then, besides, he had beseeching letters from France. Peter Toussaint and Gerard Roussel wrote to him, entreating him to come back and labour with them. He was just the man, they said, that France needed. He might be the means of saving countless souls. He would have, from them at least, the warmest welcome. Could he refuse them? What should he do? Thus month after month passed by, and of all the French believers William remained alone at Strasbourg. The honour of Christ was at stake, and the longings of his own

heart and the entreaties of his friends would not weigh with him against that.

At last Gerard Roussel owned in one of his letters that though he might preach as much as he liked, he was “obliged to keep back half the truths of the gospel to avoid giving offence.” But he resigned himself to preaching the other half. Farel would rather preach none, till the Lord should open the way for his “declaring the whole counsel of God.” And the Lord remembered Farel in his banishment. “Blessed are all they that wait for Him.”

In the meanwhile he had to learn other sad lessons. A great dispute arose at Strasbourg as to the teaching of Martin Luther. Luther said that whilst the bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper remained bread and wine, they were notwithstanding really and truly the body and blood of Christ. Farel was much grieved that Luther taught this error, and that many of those who believed the gospel took part with him. He wrote strongly to Luther, insisting that the bread and wine were in remembrance of the body and blood of Christ, and only in remembrance. But Luther turned a deaf ear, and a sad and sorrowful time of disputing and arguing followed. Farel had had to learn by bitter experience how little dependence is to be placed even in the men whom God raises up to do His work, and to whom He gives light and knowledge. It made his path a lonely one, for much as he loved Luther, and Faber, and Roussel, and Hausschein, there was not one amongst them all who was willing to cast off popery fully and completely, and to go back to the Word of God alone. Thus the happy time at Strasbourg became clouded and dark. But Farel meantime was learning to look less to man, and more to God. It was no doubt a time of great sorrow to him. We are told that “a word of dishonour spoken of Christ moved him more than the thrust of a

sword,” and that Luther, who was now the teacher of thousands, should thus mislead them, was a bitter disappointment to him. In this way the days passed till the autumn of 1526.

## *Chapter 21*

### THE OLD LETTER

**A** relic remains of those old autumn days, of which it is worthwhile to tell you. It happened in the year 1836 that the family papers belonging to an old French house were turned out of the ancient chests and cupboards in which they had been stored up for centuries. Numbers of old letters were there, written long, long ago, which no one had cared to read for several generations. Would anyone care to read them, now that they were brought out of their dark hiding-places? No: it was settled at once that they should one and all be thrown into the fire. But, as packet after packet was thus cast into the flames, one small packet was observed to have a label, "Letters concerning military matters only." "That will be worth keeping," said the owner. And thus the small packet was preserved. But when it was untied, it proved, alas! to have been labelled in mistake for some packet already burnt. It contained only some ancient letters, written more than 300 years before, and concerning no military matters at all. There were letters from the young canon, Master Peter, and from his friends, and from William Farel. And thus we can go back to that autumn of 1526, and

read some of the words which William Farel wrote at Strasbourg, on the 16th of October, to the knight Nicholas d'Esch at the town of Metz:—

“Grace be to you, mercy and peace, my good lord and brother, from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus, for the sake of Him who shed His blood for us. May He fill you with strength and power from above, to bear His Name before all, and to fight valiantly for the glory of His gospel \* \* \* For all false teaching is a denial of Jesus Christ, and all true teaching is a confession of Him—for example, if we teach that by simple faith and trust in Jesus Christ we are saved, and not by anything besides. For by that means (faith and trust in Jesus) we have eternal life; we are made good trees, children of light, children of God, and of the kingdom. And from this root spring the fruits of life, good fruits, works of light, such as beseem the children of God. Not works that give life, or save, but works that declare that we have eternal life and salvation. For he who knows God, who has tasted the endless love and mercy of God in his own experience—he who knows what honour and blessing God has put upon him by Jesus Christ—will be burning with the love of God, shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit, who is the sign and mark set upon his heart, the earnest of life eternal. And such an one will not only be unable to refrain from thanking his Father for such great blessings, but he will also do the works of true faith and love, to magnify and exalt the name of his Father, so that others may know Him also. He will do these works, not for fear he should be damned if he does not do them, but to glorify his Father. Yes, he would not fear for that end to go down into hell, willing, like Moses and Saint Paul, to be blotted out of the book of life, and to be accursed from Christ, rather than that the Name of Jesus should be dishonoured.



“There are those who say, ‘If you do this or that, you will be saved,’ or ‘if you do not this or that, ‘if you are not washed with water,’ if you do not perform some outward work men can see with their eyes,’ you will not be saved. Such people deny Jesus and His work. For He would have died in vain, and His blood would be worth nothing, if without such or such a work it could not save.

“It is very true, on the other hand, that where there is fire there will be heat, so that we are right in saying, where we do not see the fruits of faith, nor feel the warmth of love, there is no faith, or very little. And we must stand in doubt of anyone, as being a child of God, if he does not give proof of it. But still less are those children of God who perform certain works which have the appearance of goodness, doing them all the while simply from fear of hell or death. For in truth the Christian heart, where faith dwells, will do nothing except for the purpose of glorifying God, and drawing others to Him \* \* \* \*

“You ask for a Bible. You can get small ones at Paris, and I believe soon there will be a new translation of the five books of Moses, by which means the Lord will be better known.

“I need not write to you of my desire. Willingly would I turn myself into a mouse, if by that means I could get an entrance into the place (Metz) where I desire to work for Him, to whom I owe everything. May the Lord give us grace to serve Him in purity and holiness \* \* \* “And, above all, let us keep ourselves in the gentleness of Jesus, who desires that we should learn of Him. Our Lord waits a long while for sinners to turn to Him, and thus we must wait for those whom our Lord will draw to Himself. We should think it a great thing, if at first they do not blaspheme God and His Word—a greater thing if they will listen to it—still greater if they get so far as to

speak well of it and think it true, and thus at last they come to magnify it and to be subject to it. We see how the Lord bore with the small faith and the great stupidity of His apostles. And He is in truth the glass into which we should look to see how we should walk. If men had done this heretofore, we should not see things in the state in which they are now. But blessed be God, that by any means whatever, souls are brought to know Jesus and believe in Him. For if we look at the apostles, what were they when Jesus first sent them out to preach? How weak they were! How little faith they had! Therefore let a man not draw back, but if by any means he can preach Christ, let him preach Him, committing himself to the Lord. Let him preach with all his might, and stir up others to do the same. For the use of the Word will strengthen weak faith, and will teach us better what faith is, so that we shall come, like the apostles, and ask the Lord to increase it. And may it please Him to do this for us, having mercy upon us, and upon His poor sheep kept in gross ignorance and in captivity to Satan. May the Lord grant them to hear His holy word preached in purity!

“Salute, I pray you, my lord, your brother, and all those who love Him, who alone should be loved. You may send your letters to this town, directed to Capito.

“One word more. *Let Jesus hold and possess your whole heart, so that you may not think of any other thing than Jesus only, may do nothing except for Jesus, so that here and hereafter you may be always abiding in Jesus* \* \*

“Yours, with my whole heart, in our Lord,

“William Farel.

“P. S.—I am in want of nothing; on the contrary, I am as rich as Job, thanks to God, who has given me hitherto, and gives me day by day enough to live upon, but in moderation, such as I desire \* \*”

Addressed to “The very noble Knight, Messire Nicholas d’Esch, at Metz.”

Such was the old letter, so strangely preserved from the flames, to speak to us now, as to the good knight so long ago. And it was not without a purpose that the eye of God rested upon that letter, and guided the careless hand that labelled it. There were words there that told of the Son whom He loved, which He would have to be read again in these last lukewarm days. “Let Jesus hold and possess your whole heart, so that you may not think of any other thing than Jesus only, may do nothing except for Jesus.” May this be a word in season to you who read it, and may He whom Farel loved become more precious and more glorious to you, so that you may thank the Lord in the ages of eternity for the work which He gave His servant to do on that day in October, and he may hereafter thank Him with you that Christ became to you the One who filled your heart and satisfied it forever.

## Chapter 22

### THE BEAUTIFUL LAND OF DARKNESS

A few days after writing this letter, Farel left Strasbourg. There was one part of the world where French was spoken, and where his message had not as yet been given. This country was the western division of Switzerland. It seemed to Farel that it was to these French Swiss the Lord would have him go. He had been invited to Switzerland, too, by a preacher of the gospel at Berne. This man, Berthold Haller, had for some time been labouring in and around Berne, where German was chiefly spoken; but there were towns and villages further west where French was the language, and where the people were under the protection of Berne. The chief lords of Berne had been taught by Berthold Haller, and, it would seem, had really believed the gospel. It was, therefore, to be expected that they would help rather than hinder any preacher who came to their territory.

William Farel left Strasbourg on foot. One friend went with him. I do not know who this was, except that his name was Thomas. The first evening of their journey they lost their way. Torrents of rain came down, and the night set in dark and cold. They wandered on, they knew not where; at last,

thoroughly worn out, they sat down in the wet road, and gave up all hope of finding the right path. Farel felt, for the moment, utterly cast down. It was nothing new to him to spend the night out of doors. For weeks, if not for months, he had thus wandered amongst the mountains of Dauphiné, sheltering himself amongst the mossy rocks and wild laburnums. But now, on this dark, wet night God had a lesson to teach him which was to fit him, as he would not otherwise have been fitted, for the glorious days that were at hand. He wrote afterwards to his friends at Strasbourg, “You know yourselves that I am not quite such a fool as to be unable to tell one road from another, nor am I so slow and lazy as to be incapable of following an active man; but the Lord, by showing me how powerless I am even in little things, wished to teach me my utter helplessness in great things; how I am to rest, not on myself, but on Christ.”

Yes, it maybe that though Farel had been shaken from all dependence upon dear Master Faber and Roussel, and the great teacher Martin Luther, there was yet one man in whom he still felt confidence, and that man was William Farel. That night of cold, and rain, and fatigue, was a message from God, and it was well he understood it.

The two friends prayed together in the muddy road, and then started afresh. “At last,” says Farel, “after many slips and tumbles, I got to an inn, where the host endeavoured, by means of my purse, to compensate himself for the damage the French had done him in past years. I started at three next morning, leaving Thomas to settle with him, and I soon found myself wading through a marsh, where the water was so deep I had no hope of getting out of it. At last I got dear of it, and when the day dawned I began to understand where I was. If these accidents were sad for me, they were not more enjoyable for Thomas. But we were not to escape with losing

ourselves again that day; we got lost besides in the evening, and lost one another into the bargain.

“Next morning I started before three. I thought I would go to Colmar, and wait for Thomas; but though the road was good, and the distance was small, I wandered six hours about the mountains, amongst forests and valleys, vineyards and fields, and by six or seven o’clock I was further from Colmar than when I started. I only got there after ten o’clock. I had so lost my way that, had I tried to do so, I could not have done it better. The next day we got on more cleverly. Thomas and I kept together, and we rode in turns till we got to Mulhouse.” They arrived at last at their journey’s end; but they had had to wade through a marsh, to swim through floods, to scramble through vineyards and stony fields, and pathless forests. Wet to the skin, and covered with mud, they arrived at last at Basle. The lesson that Farel learnt at that time was one he never forgot, and he could thank God for the rest of his life for the cold and the rain and the darkness which had driven him from himself to Christ

For a few days he stayed at Basle, to the joy of his friend Hausschein. He then journeyed on to Berne. Farel stayed but a very little while at Berne. He was glad to see Berthold Haller, but he was longing to be amongst the French Swiss, where he could speak freely of his blessed Lord. Haller advised him to go to the village of Aisle, which belonged to Berne.

I must now tell you a little of the country in which the remainder of Farel’s life was to be spent for Christ—of the beautiful French Switzerland, where his name is still remembered, and where there are yet those who praise and thank God for having sent His servant to bring the glad tidings to their mountain villages. I wish that I could show you those glorious mountains, with their snow-covered peaks, and the green wooded valleys,

with rushing rivers and mossy rocks—the countless waterfalls—the green meadows, with a carpet of wild flowers, such as you never see in these northern countries. You would find there the deep blue gentians and the pale primrose-coloured anemones, and thick beds of large forget-me-nots, lilies, and auriculas, and many flowers which have no English names. And higher up you would find the wild Alpen roses, which are not roses, but small crimson rhododendrons, covering the grey rocks. You would see lying amongst the blue hills the beautiful lake of Geneva, with many little villages and old castles along the shore, and the snow-mountains reflected in the still water. Thousands of people go every year to see these grand mountains, and the lovely lake, and the pretty villages. But it was for another reason that William Farel found his way there, through the rain and snow, in the winter of 1526. It was not because the country was grand and beautiful, but because it was dark and miserable, that he had longed to be there.

Let me tell you something of its darkness and its misery. Four popish bishops ruled over the towns and villages of French Switzerland. They ruled in the name of the pope, whose faithful servants they were. Who was the pope at this time? Leo X. was gone to his account He knew now there was a God—he believed at last, as the devils believe and tremble. His cousin, Clement VII., now wore his triple crown, and sat upon his throne. He was a man of endless ambition; he was bent upon making for his family a great name in Europe. He contrived later to marry his cousin, Catherine of Medicis, to the King of France. You may remember how, in her old age, she was guilty of the murder of thousands upon thousands of the Lord's people in her unhappy country. An outcry was made, even by the Roman Catholics themselves, in the time of this pope, against the vice and the crimes of the

clergy. Many princes assembled at Nuremberg, and sent an appeal to the pope, desiring him to reform the church. He said he would see what could be done amongst the parish priests and curates, but as to his own court he refused all reform; and if any dared to say a word against the doings of the cardinals and bishops, they were heretics for thus speaking, and should be treated accordingly. Thus the four bishops of French Switzerland were free to follow the example of the pope, by living in self-indulgence, in ignorance, and in sin; and lest the light should break in, and their deeds should be reprov'd, it was needful that they should keep the people in ignorance also.

The Bible was unknown in those pretty mountain villages —unknown in the great towns of Geneva and Lausanne. The people came in crowds to the church of St. Peter at Geneva. But it was not to hear the blessed gospel, it was to see the brain of St. Peter and the arm of St. Anthony. Before these holy relics they knelt down and worshipp'd, and little thought how the priest who shew'd them was mocking in his heart at their folly, pleas'd though he was to pocket the money which they paid for the sight. The priest was well aware that the brain of St. Peter was a piece of pumice stone, and the arm of St. Anthony the leg of a stag. The poor wondering people would come, too, in crowds to Geneva on Christmas Eve: there, in the church of St. Gervais, they could hear the dead saints, who had been buried hundreds of years before, under the high altar, singing and chanting and talking one to another. When at last William Farel found his way to Geneva, more was heard about these singing saints. But that was not to be for some years yet. You shall hear when that time came, what yet remains to be told. I could not tell you in this short history all the mad and wicked stories told by the priests to these poor people. How much they were able to take in, you may



judge of, when you hear that they really believed that all the church bells walked of their own accord to Rome during Passion Week, to ask pardon of the pope for all their sins. There were the bells in the towers, no doubt, but “those,” said the priests, “are only the appearance of bells. If you were to ring them they would give no sound.” And not even the most mischievous of boys dared to try whether the bells would ring or not.

Such was the darkness of that bright and beautiful country, and as yet no voice had been heard there to speak of better things, no light had broken in upon this land of the shadow of death.

## *Chapter 23*

### THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMASTER

**T**o the south-east of the Lake of Geneva, not far from the river Rhone, is the village of Aigle. Close beside it the great waterfall, called the Grande Eau, dashes from the precipices at the entrance of a woody glen. All around are the great mountains, and the beautiful mountain valleys, with their rich green meadows and shady woods, the little wooden cottages, surrounded by walnut trees and vines, and above them the grassy slopes, where the cows and the goats feed, and the great precipices, with snowy peaks behind them. It was on a winter's day, in 1526, that a traveller arrived alone in this beautiful village. He called himself Master Ursinus. He said he was going to open a day-school in one of the cottages, where the village children might learn to read and write. The parents were glad to send their children in those winter days, when there was little work to be done out of doors, and there were no other schools at hand. After a while the children told their parents that the master taught them, besides reading and writing, beautiful stories about the Lord Jesus—how He loved sinners, and had been punished instead of them; and how He had died and risen from the grave,

and was still the sinners' Friend, though He was in heaven at God's right hand.

The parents listened and wondered, and then one by one they too went to ask Master Ursinus to tell them these wonderful stories. And Master Ursinus, who was a kind and friendly man, told them gladly more and more about the blessed Lord Jesus and His love and grace. He told them, too, that purgatory was nowhere to be found, that those whom the Lord saves He washes whiter than snow—He makes them as fit for heaven as He Himself is—He takes them straight from this sad and evil world into the Father's house above, into the bright glory of God. Master Ursinus told them, too, that it was to this blessed Lord Himself, and not to Peter or to Mary, or to any saints or angels, that they must go for pardon and for grace—they must go to Jesus only, and through Him to the Father.

The poor people listened gladly; they were thankful that this kind French gentleman had come amongst them, for he showed them the Saviour they had never known before. As the Israelites looked up at the serpent which Moses had put upon the pole, so did these poor men and women of Aigle look up at the Lord in glory, and, believing, had life through His name. There was just then no clergyman at Aigle—the old clergyman was dead, and a new one had not yet been appointed.

One day Master Ursinus was seen by the people to go into the church, and up into the pulpit. There he told them that he was now going to preach regularly, that his true name was William Farel, and that he rejoiced to be there to tell them the glad tidings of the love of God. He had at first been forbidden to preach by the Council of Berne, because he was not a clergyman. But a month or two later this order was recalled, and he was not only allowed, but desired to preach. "We desire," said the Council, "that all

preachers in our country preach the Word of God freely, publicly, openly, and without reserve, and that none should hinder them in preaching what appears conformable to the Word of God, even should their preaching be found to contradict the decrees, ordinances, and teaching of men, what men soever they may be.”

The people had never heard of William Farel; but the priests knew that name only too well. They were filled with fury when they heard that he was really in their midst, preaching the gospel, and that in a church, from a pulpit! But it was not so easy to stop him, for the lords of Berne had given him full permission to preach till the new priest was sent there. All that the priests could do was to stir up the people of Aigle and of all the country round, and to spread every evil report they could invent of the new preacher.

Farel wrote to his friends at this time—” The father of lies rises up against me daily in his people, and would have me to shrink from the preaching of the gospel; but Christ, ‘in whose service I am, is much mightier than Satan. Trusting in Him, I am not afraid to tread the enemy under my feet, to invade his kingdom, and to rescue from his tyranny, by means of the Word, those whom the Father has drawn to Christ—to hold forth the Word of God, and to trample down man’s traditions, and man’s inventions, and to invite all the weary and heavy laden to come to Christ the Saviour. And I entreat all those who have come to Him, to ask the Father that the Holy Ghost may shed abroad in all the hearts around the love of God, that His Word may be obeyed, and that true worship may ascend at last, of which the Lord spoke, saying that it was a worship in spirit and in truth. Not at Jerusalem, nor on this mountain nor on that, but a worship and service which is for His honour

and glory, offered up by those who are themselves given up, heart and soul, to God.”

The Lord gave great power to the Word preached by Farel. Numbers were saved; and many came to hear from all the country round.

Just at this time came at last an invitation from his beloved France.

It seems that one day when there was a great reception at the Court of France, two young princes came to be presented to the Princess Margaret. They were the sons of Prince Robert de la Marck. The princess said to Gerard Roussel, who was present, “Take an opportunity of speaking to those two young princes about Christ.” Roussel did so, and found that the two lads were already believers, having by some means heard the gospel. Roussel then told them that they ought to do their utmost to make it known amongst their subjects. They said they willingly would do so, but that they were too young and too ignorant to do much themselves. If only a preacher of the gospel would come to them, they would help and encourage him in every way. Roussel said, “I know of only one man who is thoroughly fitted for the work; it is William Farel; invite him.” The young princes said they would only be too glad, if Roussel would send him to them. “Our father would be delighted,” they said. “He should live in the palace with us, as one of our own family. All who are there would welcome him. Let him come early in the year.”

This meant the year 1527; and early in the year Farel got the letters of entreaty written to him by Gerard Roussel and by Peter Toussaint. Both these friends were filled with joy at the thought of a door being at last open to Farel in France. The young princes felt so sure he would come that they at once got a printing-press, that he might print books and tracts, and send them all about the kingdom.

All these things Gerard Roussel related to his friend William. But he added, “you are, however, well aware what we expect of you, namely, that you should refrain from mentioning any subject that might cause divisions (such as the mass), and that you should content yourself with preaching Christ, and the right use of the sacraments.”

Once more William had to decide which was the path in which the Lord would have him to go. Once more he might, by one word, have the desire of his heart fulfilled, by returning to his beloved country.

Perhaps you are surprised that, after all, he said he could not go. He was not prepared to keep in the back-ground any truth the Lord had shown him. If it caused divisions, he still must preach it. And had not his Master said, “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you nay; but rather division.” It was better to walk in the steps of Jesus, than in the steps of Gerard Roussel and of the Princess Margaret.

Nor could he leave the Lord’s work in the Swiss villages, for he now felt sure the Lord had sent him there. His work was owned and blessed in a wonderful way; and, though the hungry, thirsty souls around him were not his countrymen, they were the sheep and lambs of Christ. It was for His blessed Word they were thus athirst and an hungered. It was His blessed gospel they crowded to hear, and the faithful shepherd would not leave them. No doubt God did not leave the young princes without the help they needed, and He knew what help was best. We need not grieve much over their disappointment.

Meanwhile, the glad tidings spread from village to village, and from town to town, amongst the Swiss valleys and around the lake of Geneva, as we read in the old days of the Apostles—” Much people were added to the Lord.”

Did you ever think what those words mean, “added to the Lord? Not merely forgiven, converted, but “added to the Lord”; added to Him, Who is the Head of the Body—the Church—to Him of whom all who believe become the members, “joined to the Lord’ by the Holy Ghost. Thus, if you and I are believers, we have duties and blessings which belong to us as “members of the Body of Christ” — “members one of another.” We do not stand alone; we are not called merely to love one another. No doubt in the Old Testament times, a believer, who was really walking with the Lord, would love other believers. Thus Jonathan loved David, and Ruth loved Naomi, and they loved one another, because they were God’s believing people. But now there is a tie nearer than even the tie of love. “We, being many, are one body,” called not only to love another, but to feel and think, to speak and act, as one—all the members moved and directed by the One Head to act in concert; one member doing this, another doing that, according to their different places in the Body, but all acting together, as the hands, the feet, the eyes, and ears in our natural bodies.

And it was this which William Farel taught to those who had believed. They were now one body with all who believed in the Lord Jesus, not only in Switzerland, but everywhere. “Let there not be in Christ’s Body,” he said, “either fingers, or hands, or feet, or eyes, or ears, or arms working separately, each for itself; but let there be only one heart, that nothing can divide.”

## *Chapter 24*

### THE REJECTED MESSAGE

**T**hus was the Word of God taught, and in one village after another the light began to dawn, and men were turning to God. You may suppose that Satan would not let this work of God alone. Very soon he had stirred up a large party of priests and monks. These lazy and ignorant men began to tremble for the consequences of the preaching which brought men to Christ. “They will turn away from us,” they said, “and it will soon be ‘Down with the church!’” Alas, they little knew what the church was!

They gained over to their cause the bailiff of Aigle, and the governor of the district. The favour shewn to Farel by the lords of Berne, instead of gaining power for him, only roused the jealousy and enmity of these two men. Their permission had not been asked, nor their wishes consulted.

If Farel had been in any measure trusting to the power of man rather than to the power of God, he was now to learn a lesson. The bailiff and the governor told him he was a heretic, and forbade him, not only to preach, but to teach in his school.



The lords of Berne speedily sent a messenger to post up placards on every church-door in all the country round, saying that their displeasure was great at hearing that “the very learned Farel” had been forbidden to preach the Word of God, and they commanded all officers and governors to allow him to preach publicly “the doctrines of the Lord.” The only consequence of this order was that on the 25th of July, 1527, furious crowds assembled at Aigle, and at all the villages round. They tore down the placards, they shouted, “No more submission to Berne! Down with Farel!” They then rushed upon Farel, intending to seize him. But the same mysterious power which had so often before guarded this servant of the Lord, was stronger than the enemy. There stood Farel, in the midst of the converted flock, who waited, calmly but firmly, ready to defend him if needful. But there was no need. The angry crowd dared not come forward, and one by one they dispersed, and left him unharmed.

For a few days Farel left Aigle to preach and teach in the villages around. He then returned to his work as before in the school and church of Aigle. The priests contented themselves for a while with calling him bad names at a safe distance. They were too ignorant to argue with him, and they knew that he would appeal to the Bible if they attempted it.

Farel heard that one priest at Lausanne was far more intelligent and less prejudiced than the rest, —that he was besides a sincere and honest man. His name was Natalis Galeotto. He was a chaplain to the Bishop of Lausanne. Farel had no means of speaking to this priest: he, therefore, wrote him a letter.

He said that the Lord Jesus was willing to listen when any sinful man came to speak to Him. He never turned away from the least or lowest. Therefore it was only asking Natalis to follow in the steps of his Master

when he requested that he would listen for a while to one who had no claim to learning or greatness.

Then Farel related his own history, how the Lord had brought him from pitch darkness into His own marvellous light. He entreated Natalis to see to it that he taught the same blessed gospel as that which God in His mercy had taught to Master Faber and to him. “And,” he added, “you will not be able to do otherwise than preach it, if by the marvellous grace of God you, too, have been rescued from the power of sin and Satan.”

“But, alas!” he went on to say, “there are some who bear upon their foreheads the mark that they are the enemies of God. They set themselves up to be as God, declaring another way of salvation and of pardon than that which Christ has taught. They put their own commandments in the place of the Word of God, though that which they command is as contrary to that which God commands as light is contrary to darkness. And men are, alas! become so blinded that they cling to these human inventions, and will not give them up, whilst at the same time they readily give up the faith which saves. There is nothing to be looked for longer from this evil and corrupt tree of man’s planting. Nothing can be done for it, except that we may look to God in His mercy to gather out boughs and branches, and engraft them one by one into the living Vine. But none can be united to Christ except by the Holy Ghost—not by outward ceremonies and ordinances—by the Holy Ghost alone. And what has come of men meddling and playing, as they have done, with the things of God? Even the outward observances which God has commanded have disappeared. Where is the Lord’s Supper? Who shall restore us that blessed feast, in which we are called to remember Him—to shew forth His death till He come? Alas! men are living as though they

were dedicated to heathen gods. Who is there who cares that Christ is coming again?

He entreats Natalis to observe that all this error and wickedness sprang from one root, the selfishness and covetousness of the clergy—the love of money, which is the root of all evil. And he continues his letter in these words, which it would be well indeed if all who profess to preach and teach would read and remember: —“May it indeed break our hearts to see how the honour of God is laid in the dust, how His church lies in ruins, her walls broken down, the sanctuary of God defiled! If we really believe that Christ suffered for us, if our hearts have ever been touched by the remembrance of His blood shed for us, if the Holy Ghost has shewn us ever so little of the love of God—if we know that we shall have to render up our account to Him, if we are aware that He will call us to a reckoning as to the souls to whom we have preached, and that it will be an awful day for us then, if now we have been leading them in the wrong road—if all these things are indeed so, we have no time to lose—we have not a moment to delay before we begin to sound forth the praises of God that all may hear. Let us warn and alarm the wicked on account of their sins, and then let us set before them for their comfort the rich grace of the gospel. Let us, then, preach Christ as the one standard of Christian walk and talk. Let us teach that which He and His apostles taught, and teach nothing more. If that teaching is not enough what will be? If that is not perfect, what is? If that does not bring souls to heaven, what else will bring them there? If that does not convert sinners, what will convert them? If that does not bring forth the fruit of righteousness, what will? If everything is not contained in that Word of God, where else are we to look for it? The wisdom of God needs no other

wisdom to make it perfect. That alone will I preach to the people. I will know nothing besides.”

And he ends by entreating Natalis to cast aside all that man has invented, and to take God’s Word alone, as the one treasury out of which to draw forth all that he preached and taught, submitting himself wholly to that Word, and to that only.

This letter was treated by Natalis with silent contempt. But it will be one day remembered by him who despised it. The day will come when he will stand at the judgment seat of Christ, and that message of God’s love and grace will appear against him, —Christ’s call to him through His servant — the call which he refused and disobeyed. What a solemn thing it is for each one of us, when such messages reach us, let the entreaty come from whom it may, that we should submit ourselves to the Word of God, and judge all our doings by that alone. From God only can such a message come. And if any who have read these words of Farel, would take the opposite course to this poor priest, it would be a blessed day for their souls.

God would be well-pleased at the sight of those who set diligently to work to compare their belief, their practice, their outward religious forms, with His blessed Word, and who, at any cost, give up, there and then, all that cannot there be found and proved. Many a beloved friend would be offended, many a beloved form would be set aside, but Christ would be honoured, and His presence would be known. “He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.”

Was it much to expect of Natalis that he should at once get a Bible, and compare his belief with the words of God? That he should search through

that book, which he owned to be of God, to see whether his masses, his service-books, his vestments, his saints' days, his images, his seven sacraments, were there to be found? It was, indeed, much to expect of him. But that much God looks for in each one who professes the name of Christ. Are you and I careful to do this in all things great and small? We say that by the Scriptures we are thoroughly furnished to all good works. Let it be seen that with regard to all, we search into the Word of God, and are able to say of all, "Thus has the Lord commanded."

## *Chapter 25*

### THE BEGGING FRIAR

**I**t was about this time that a mendicant friar came to the villages around the Lake of Geneva. The mendicant friars were the followers of Francis of Assisi. Francis had commanded his monks to have no property, and to live by begging. These monks therefore roamed the country, and begged from door to door. They would return to their convents laden with money, with cheese, with wine, with fruit, with eggs, or whatever else they could persuade the village people to give them as a means of getting to heaven. Farel knew this begging friar by sight. He knew, too, that he had preached in another village that all who listened to Farel's preaching would be punished for ever in hell.

The monk had now come on to Aigle. He had no intentions of giving his warnings there. He was not the man who would attack a lion in his den. He had come to Aigle to beg for some wine, for which the village was famous. He started with terror when, in the street of the village, Farel stood before him.

“I accosted him amiably,” says Farel, “as our Lord has commanded. I asked him if he had preached at Noville. “He said, ‘Yes,’ looking much frightened.

“I asked if the devil could preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus, and if all who hear the gospel are damned.

“He answered, ‘No.’

‘I said ‘Why, then, did you preach that publicly? I pray you prove your words, and shew me what I have said amiss, for I would sooner die than mislead poor people whom the Lord Jesus has ransomed with His precious blood. And I would rather die than teach any other gospel than that of our Lord Jesus.’

“Then he whispered in my ear,’ I was told you were a heretic, and that you misled the people.’

““I was told! that is not enough,’ I answered. ‘Prove that I have done it, and stick to what you have preached. As for me, I am ready to stand up for what I have preached, were it in the fire.’

““I didn’t come here to dispute with you, but to beg for my convent,’ he said; ‘whether you preach the truth or not, is no business of mine.’

““There is no occasion to dispute’ I answered,’ I only ask you to prove what you have said, for the honour of God. For the honour of God ought to be dearer to us than everything else.’

“Thus walking together, as I pressed him to prove his words, he kept turning his head this way and that, as if with an uneasy conscience. Then he whispered in my ear, ‘You are a heretic, and you lead people astray.’

“Just then, some labourers followed us, coming home from their work, and I said to them,’ this good priest has been preaching that I am a teacher

of lies, and that those who hear me are damned. And just this moment he told me I was a heretic, who leads people astray.’

“Then he said, ‘What do you say I told you? It is all out of your own head, you are mad!’

“I answered, ‘God is witness of what you said, why do you deny it? If I am what you say, prove it, nobody will hurt you, prove it to these good people. They would rather hear you than me.’”

Then the monk murmured something about Farel’s having preached against the offerings made to the church. He was, perhaps, doubtful whether he should get his wine.

“I preached,” said Farel,” and I maintain it, that no living man has a right to order any way of serving God, other than that which He has Himself commanded. He has told us neither to add to His words, nor to diminish from them. And if an angel came down from Heaven to tell us to do anything which God has not commanded, let him be accursed!”

The monk answered, “Offerings should be made for the honour of God, and in gratitude to Him.”

Farel said, “We honour God by remembering the poor, and by keeping God’s commandments. We show Him gratitude by worshipping Him in spirit and in truth, with a broken and contrite heart, for we ought to be displeased with ourselves that we have not followed His holy commandments, according to the profession made in our baptism. It was a profession of living and dying in the faith of our Lord, and that faith is the only law for every Christian; we need make no more laws for ourselves. For there is none better than God, who can give a better rule than He has given. There is none wiser who would know how to do so. There is none greater who has a right to do so.”



The monk, not knowing what to say, or how to get away, behaved like a naughty child. He pulled off his cap, threw it on the ground, and stamped upon it with rage, saying, "I wonder the earth doesn't swallow you up!"

"Listen to Master Farel," said a countryman, laying his hand on the monk's sleeve, "he is willing to listen to you."

"Don't put your excommunicated hand upon me!" said the monk.

"Is everybody excommunicated who touches you?" said the countryman, "have you a different God from ours?"

A crowd had gathered by this time, and fearing a disturbance, a constable came up, seized the monk and Farel, and led them off to the castle of Aigle. He shut up the monk in one tower, and Farel in the other. The next morning, they were taken before the magistrates, and Farel was allowed to make his defence.

"Gentlemen," said Farel, "you are the rulers to whom God has commanded us to give honour, because He has entrusted you with authority, to be used for His glory. If I have been misleading the people, as this friar says, I desire to be punished. But in that case, the friar must prove that what I preach is contrary to the Word of God. But if he cannot prove it, I desire that those to whom he has falsely accused me, may be undeceived."

The frightened monk here fell upon his knees, and said, "My lords, I ask your pardon. Master Farel, I ask your pardon also. I am willing to own that I spoke against you on account of false reports which I heard of you."

"Don't ask my pardon," said Farel. "I had forgiven you, and I had prayed to God for you, before I met you in the street. I should have said nothing about it, had it only concerned me. But it was a question of the honour of God. It was His blessed gospel which was evil-spoken of. As for me, I am only a poor sinner, with no righteousness of my own, saved only by the

death of Jesus. I do not want to have you punished, I only want you to say, here in public, before my face, what you said behind my back; I can then give you my reasons for preaching as I have done.”

A gentleman from Berne, coming in at this moment, proposed that the monk should be sentenced to hear Farel’s sermon the next day, and if he found nothing in it contrary to the Bible, he should publicly confess that he agreed with it: On the other hand, if he found it was false teaching, he should give his reasons for saying so. The monk was sentenced accordingly, and then released, having promised, by giving his hand, that he would appear at the sermon, next day. But he was never seen again.

## *Chapter 26*

### FRIENDS AND FELLOW-LABOURERS

**F**arel returned to his labours. It was a work of patience, and, for the time, almost an unseen work. The priests, on the other hand, were everywhere to be seen and heard. Some came over from Savoy and from the southern provinces of Switzerland, to help their friends—the priests of the Pays de Vaud. They gathered the people together in every village, raised riots, and spoke loudly and violently. They roused the ignorant crowds to resist the government of Berne. They led them on to tear down' the government orders which were posted up on the church doors; they formed processions; they beat drums; they led bands of excited people into the churches to yell and shout, so as to drown the voice of the preacher.

In one village, where the men could not summon courage themselves to attack Farel, the women were sent after him to beat him with their washing clubs. You must remember that a Swiss washerwoman does not stand washing over a tub full of hot water and soapsuds. She takes the clothes to a mountain stream, lays them out on a board where the clear fresh water will run over them, and meanwhile batters them with a sort of wooden spade.

This plan succeeds in making them clean, but has the disadvantage of at last making holes in the clothes.

It was with these wooden spades that Farel was attacked by a troop of excited women. It was only one of many occasions when, like John Nelson, the Methodist, he had cuts and bruises as his marks of honour. "I bear in my body," said Paul the apostle, "the marks of the Lord Jesus."

Other sorrows came upon Farel besides that of seeing the gospel rejected and despised. Some preachers came from France to help him after a while, and one also from Zurich, whose name was Ballista. He was a Parisian, had formerly been a monk, and had now a violent hatred of popery.

But hatred of popery, and love to Christ, are not one and the same thing, and one may have plenty of the former without a spark of the latter.

Farel soon found out that his new friend was a terrible hindrance in the work. "He had been brought up," said Farel, "in the idleness of a convent, gluttonous and lazy. He found it was not at all to his taste to make rough journeys in all weathers, and eat just such plain fare as could be had in the mountains. He heartily wished himself back in his monk's hood, and when he found he was abused and insulted, he poured forth waggon loads of threats." So ended the labours of Ballista; and it was a relief to Farel that they were of short duration.

Meanwhile, whilst Satan was thus busy, the Lord was working in many hearts. In one village and another souls were saved—here a cowherd, and there a boatman; here a poor washerwoman, and there a vine-dresser: people who were but little thought of except by the Lord, who chose them before the foundation of the world that they should be jewels in the crown of Christ.

When Farel was not employed in teaching, or preaching, or praying, he continued diligently to study the Bible. Many of his letters to his friends at this time are still to be seen. He wrote to them on the subjects which he was searching out in Scripture. For instance, he wrote to several friends on the great question which was already a question in the days of the Apostle Paul, and which is still so often disputed by Christian people, Is the believer under the law or not?

Several of his friends believed that though the believer is no longer under the ceremonial law, he is still under the law of the ten commandments. Therefore when they read such texts as these, “Ye are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. vi. 14); “If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (Gal. v. 18) — they said that meant the ceremonial law.

“If,” said Farel, “it is the ceremonial law only which has been abolished, how could that agree with what is said about the new law written in our hearts? And when Paul speaks of lust which is increased by the law, and says again that the law is not made for a righteous man, there is no question of ceremonies, but of the ten commandments themselves. They were laid upon men with the spirit of bondage, with fear, and with threats. By these commandments all are condemned and convicted. Not one escapes the curse, since no one keeps the commandments. It is therefore a yoke we cannot bear. We are only weakened by the burden of the law, and love God the less, having the law as a task-master; whereas the chief commandment of the law is that we should love God with our whole heart Christ and His glory are lessened if only the ceremonies and the curse are removed — if it is not true that He frees us from the whole bondage of the law, bringing us into perfect liberty.”

Is it, then, liberty to do evil? Such is the thought which the natural heart has of liberty. And it is true, indeed, that if a man were taken from under the yoke of the law and left to himself, he would rejoice in the freedom of following his own desires and his own evil passions.

But is the believer in the Lord Jesus left to himself?

Is there nothing else besides the condemning law, and the weak, sinful man?

Do you believe in the Holy Ghost? Millions stand up in church every Sunday and say that they do.

“The Spirit,” said William Farel, “has been given to us by the Father, by the which Spirit we are brought as sons into the glory of the Father, giving thanks to the Father in all things. You must judge,” he adds, “which of these two beliefs—that we are under the law, or that we are brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God—gives most honour to Christ and is most in accordance with the Scripture.”

But, alas, our natural thought is not “what brings most honour to Christ,” but what brings most honour to ourselves. It is humbling to be told that we cannot obey the law of God. We would rather think of the law as something that will improve us, than as something that can only condemn us, and declare us to be past mending. “I live,” said Paul, “yet not I, Christ liveth in me.” But we would rather have an I, even under the heavy yoke of the law, than have no I, and let Christ be all. Not only all for us, but also all in us. Christ our object, the spirit of Christ the power, in all we say and do, down even to the common acts of eating and drinking.

“If the flesh acts, it is only to do evil; its place is to be dead and not better. We have both right and power to hold it as such (if we are God’s children), because Christ is dead and we live in His risen life. He has Himself become

our life.” That is to say, Christ died in my place. I am therefore to count myself as dead, and own nothing now but Christ.

“By faith in Jesus Christ, Paul lived indeed. The Christ who was the source of his life, who was his life, was its object also. It is this which is always the proof of the life of Christ in us; He Himself is its object—He alone.”

Are you afraid, then, you would not do good works enough if you are not under the law? Think for a moment what sort of works will a man do, whose object is Christ alone?

But I do not know whether any of Farel’s friends understood as he did, that we are thus walking, if believers, in a new power, and a power as mighty as the law was weak. It may be that in this matter, as in many others, he stood alone. But to stand alone is sometimes the post of honour. Farel might not himself have been able to give all the Scripture proofs that can be given on this subject by those who have “from children known the holy Scriptures.” Till we see that we are “dead,” we do not understand how it is we are no longer under the law. We may come to the right conclusion by the teaching of the Spirit of God, but we may not be able to give a clear account of the Scripture teaching which leads up to this conclusion.

When we remember out of what thick darkness Farel had been brought, we can only wonder that he was as fully instructed as he was, in the mind of God. He had yet much to learn, and there was no doubt much that he never did learn. But we should be thankful that the Lord enabled him to be faithful to the light he had.

## *Chapter 27*

### STRANGE TIMES AT BERNE

**W**hen Farel had been at Aigle a little more than a year, he had the refreshment of a visit to Berne on a very remarkable occasion. The Council and the citizens of Berne held a meeting, in November, 1527, at which it was determined that a public disputation between the papists and the reformers should take place there in the January of the following year.

The Romish bishops and priests, the chief gentlemen and citizens of the Swiss towns, and the preachers and teachers of the gospel, were all alike invited. Each party was to give a reason for the faith which they held. But these reasons were to be given from the Bible only. No other book was to be referred to upon any subject.

What answer would the papists give to such an invitation as this? The four Swiss bishops—of Lausanne, Constance, Basle, and Sion—found various excuses for not coming themselves, and for not sending any priests to speak in their name. The Bernese assured them that if they failed to come, they would be forthwith deprived of all their privileges in the canton of Berne. They still refused to be present. The other bishops and many priests



followed their example. The Emperor Charles V. himself ordered that the conference should be delayed, but the Council of Berne replied that, as everyone who had accepted the invitation was already arrived, it would be impossible to defer it.

Let us now place ourselves in the old city of Berne in that month of January, 1528. Whom should we find there? There was of course the great preacher of Berne, Berthold Haller. Zwingli was there. Our old friend Hausschein from Basle, Farel's old friends from Strasbourg, Bucer and Capito, and many, many more from far and near, who had believed and preached the glad tidings of the grace of God. On the other side were about 350 Swiss and German priests. The conference was to be held in the church of the Cordeliers. Farel could not understand what was said, as the whole was in German. But it was pleasant to be amongst so many old and dear friends and fellow labourers in the gospel of Christ

The conference began by the rules, or rather the rule, for the disputation being read aloud. "No proof shall be proposed that is not drawn from the holy Scriptures, and no explanation shall be given of those Scriptures that does not come from Scripture itself, explaining obscure texts by such as are clear."

What a rule! No ancient volumes of "the fathers." No prayer books, or canon laws—nothing but the Bible. The Bible without notes or comments. The 350 priests brought face to face with that—to see what they could find there, and what they could not find! The names of the Romish bishops were then called over, but there were none to answer to them. The first subject was read aloud. "The holy Christian church, of which Christ is the sole Head, is born of the Word of God, abideth in it, and listeneth not to the voice of a stranger."

A monk rose up and said, “The word sole is not in Scripture. Christ has left a vicar here below.”

“The vicar that Christ left is the Holy Ghost,” replied Berthold Haller.

A priest then said a few words as to the unity of the Roman church, and the divisions amongst the reformers.

Bucer replied, “Whosoever preaches Jesus as the only Saviour, we own as our brother. Besides, a unity in error is not a thing to boast of. Mahomet could boast of that. God permits divisions, in order that those who belong to Him may learn to look not to men, but to the Word of God, and the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Therefore let us all the more turn to the Scriptures.”

They did turn to the Scriptures, they there searched for all that God has said as to the work of His Son. They searched in vain for the mass and for purgatory, for prayer to the saints, for the adoration of images. The priests became more and more angry as the Scripture texts were read aloud. “If they wish to burn the two ministers of Berne,” said one of them, “I will undertake to carry them both to the stake.”

When Sunday morning came, the people assembled in the church, as up to this time they had always done, to hear the mass. The priest stood ready in his gaudy vestments on the altar steps, for these things had not yet been forbidden in Berne. But before the service began, Zwingli appeared in the pulpit. He said aloud the form called the Apostles’ Creed. When he came to the words “He ascended into Heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead,” he stopped. “If these words are true,” he said, after a pause, “the mass is a lie.” And as he continued to speak, the people gazed at him in wonder and consternation.

But greater was their consternation, when suddenly the priest upon the altar steps stripped off his priestly vestments, threw them upon the altar, and said aloud, “Unless the mass has better proofs from Scripture than I know of, I can have no more to do with it”.

The whole city of Berne was thunderstruck at the news of this Sunday morning. Three days later was the feast of St Vincent, the patron saint of Berne. On that day high mass had always been celebrated in the cathedral. The Council did not even now forbid it. The sacristans went as usual to prepare the incense, and to light the large wax tapers. But they waited alone in the cathedral. Neither priests nor people appeared.

In the evening, at the time of vespers, the organist went to his post. But as before, no one came. The poor man waited with sad forebodings. Would there be an end to that beautiful service, which was also a livelihood to him? The end came sooner than he expected. When, tired of waiting, he left the church, some of the citizens came in, fell upon the organ, and broke it to pieces. No more choral services at Berne!

The conference was now nearly over. Two priests more had owned themselves convinced by the proofs from Scripture, as to the mass being contrary to the Christian faith.

The last discussion was to be in Latin, between Farel and a priest from Paris. The point which the priest desired to prove was, that men were to submit to the church. Being reduced to the Bible for a reason to give, he quoted Matt v. 25. “Agree with thine adversary quickly.” He thus explained it: “The adversary is the devil. We are here commanded to submit to the devil, how much more then to the church? “This was too much for the gravity even of the reformers, and the priest was disconcerted at being

answered by their laughter. It was certainly impossible to answer such a speech by arguments.

The conference being over, the Council decreed that the mass should be abolished, and the churches stripped of their ornaments and images. Twenty-five altars and a crowd of images were destroyed at once, in the cathedral. Zwingli preached to the people amidst the shattered fragments. His last words were these, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." What a word for England now!

And so the cathedral of Berne stood emptied of images, but in their place were living worshippers of the living and true God. In the eyes of the priests, and of the poor organist, it had "become a stable" "Only fit to keep cattle in," said they. And one, in the height of his anger, rode into it upon an ass. Are there not many now, whose thoughts of a "place of worship," are much the same as those of these poor Swiss priests? Are there none to whom the things that can be seen, the painted windows, the carved images, the "long drawn aisles," are dear and even sacred, but who are utterly blind and unconscious as to the presence of the unseen Christ in the midst of the two and three, wherever they are gathered in His name? Where He is not, they do not miss Him. Where the music and the painting and the sculpture are not, they are conscious only of being "in a barn," or "in a stable." The Holy Ghost is the One whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him. But where He leads the worship, and where Christ is present, the believing heart craves no more for the sights and sounds, which form all that the world knows of worship—a worship enjoyed by the eyes and ears of men, but which is, alas! too often in the sight of God, "as the husks that the swine do eat"

## Chapter 28

### FIELDS WHITE TO THE HARVEST

**O**n the 7th of February, the Council of Berne passed an edict that the Romish bishops should no longer have power or authority in the canton. “These four bishops,” they said, “know well how to shear their sheep but know not how to feed them.” The sheep were now to be shorn no more, and it was the desire of the Council that they should be fed.

Farel returned to the villages of the Pays de Vaud, and though still for a time single-handed, he carried the gospel into every mountain valley, preaching in churches where he could do so; if not, in houses, in fields, on mountain sides, or in the streets.

Thus passed away the remainder of the year 1528.

The lords of Berne desired earnestly that the four parishes of the Pays de Vaud which were under their rule, should receive the gospel. Message after message was sent to the magistrates and to the priests, desiring them to leave Farel to preach unhindered. Riot after riot was raised by the priests. They assured the people, that were they to leave the Romish faith, the pope himself, the emperor Charles, and the king of France, would all come in

person with a large army, ravage their country, and punish the Bernese. Mobs were called together by the sound of a drum, and harangued by the excited priests till they were ready for any act of violence. A man called Anthony Nicodey rushed into the church where Farel was preaching, and upset the pulpit. They constantly interrupted his sermons by loud noises, or by asking silly questions. Both men and women would call him names during the preaching, and would beat him in the streets. They tore down the Bernese edicts from the church doors whenever they were posted up. They abused the Bernese Council. At the same time they accused Farel to the Council of having stirred up the people against the government, and forbidden them to pay taxes.

So month after month passed by. The Lord was working by His servant, and Satan by his servants also.

At last the Council of Berne sent some of their number to the Pays de Vaud. These councillors were to call together the chief inhabitants of the four parishes. They were by their means to put the question to every person in all the towns and villages of these parishes, whether they would henceforward have the mass or the gospel. As the greater number decided it, so would the government leave it. They could not force the gospel upon them, but if they desired to have it, they should be protected from all who would hinder. Which would they have? And now appeared the fruit of Farel's toilsome labours. In three of the four parishes, the mass of the people declared with one voice they would have mass no more, they would have the gospel as Master Farel preached it, and in that faith would they live and die. The fourth parish, Ormont, declared for the mass. The councillors said they should be allowed to go on with the mass until Whitsuntide. The government would then again inquire their mind, and they

hoped to find that they would, by that time, welcome a gospel preacher in the place of the priest

In the meantime, preachers came from distant parts to take the places of the priests who were now dismissed from Aigle, from Bex, and from Ollon. These were the three reformed parishes of which I have told you.

Not only were gospel preachers called to the towns and villages of these three parishes, but a fresh order followed from the Council of Berne, which gave the last blow to the old worship. "Let none hope," said the Council, "that the popish days are to return. The altars shall be demolished, the idols shall be burned, the pictures shall be destroyed, and there shall be nothing left to tell of the past idolatry."

At once were these orders executed. The strange sight was seen of the burning piles in every village, on which the idols were cast, amidst the thanksgivings of the people. The new governor, sent from Berne, carried out his orders fully and completely. Those who had ill-treated Farel were to be called to account. The women who had beaten him with their clubs were to pay five livres apiece. Those who had falsely accused him of sedition, ten livres. Where was Anthony Nicodey. He must have to answer for upsetting the pulpit. But he had fled, and could never be found.

And now Ormont alone held out. But whether they liked it or not, a gospel preacher was to have full liberty to preach amongst them, and they were to touch him if they dared. And so it came to pass that by the summer of the year 1529, Ormont too received the glad tidings. The mass was abolished. The priest was dismissed. The whole of the four parishes were now delivered from the darkness and the bondage of the long ages of popery. True, many amongst the people still clung to the old worship, but the number of these became less as each year went by, and to this day those

villages and towns of the Pays de Vaud, still profess, at least, the gospel faith.

We must not think that all who do so now are truly believers, or that all who did so then had really turned to God. There are many reasons why the rule of popery is found to be a heavy yoke, and thousands who have no love to God, and no care for their souls, are glad enough to cast it off. “It is a religion of money,” is the saying of nine out of ten— perhaps of ninety-nine out of a hundred in popish countries; but we must not conclude because a man dislikes to give his money for senseless objects that he is therefore enlightened, or that he loves God.

Still we cannot but see, unless we are blind, that the preaching of the gospel is always used by God for the saving of countless souls. And were we to imagine that the great work for which God raised up the gospel preachers of the 16th century was merely to release men from the bondage of priestcraft, we should have altogether lost sight of His blessed purpose. We should entirely misunderstand what power it was which worked in the men of the Pays de Vaud when they declared in the face of the priests they would have no mass, but the gospel of Christ. We may thank God for the thousands who were then truly turned to Him, and who burned their idols, not from a love of novelty and excitement, but solemnly and deliberately, because they now knew the living God. Farel thanked the Lord, and took courage. Many other preachers had now arrived. The time was come when he could turn his steps elsewhere, and be happy in knowing that the sheep of Christ would be fed by faithful shepherds in his absence.

There were other towns and cantons of Switzerland which were in alliance with the city of Berne, though not subjects of Berne, as were the four parishes of the Pays de Vaud. Amongst the large towns which were



partly dependent upon Berne for protection, were Lausanne and Friburg. And in fact the whole of Switzerland west and north of the canton of Berne was in alliance with the Bernese government. The Bernese were very anxious that the gospel should be made known wherever their influence extended, and the Council of Berne gave to Farel a letter of introduction to the various towns and villages of west Switzerland. They advised him to preach only where there was some desire to hear the glad tidings, and they sent messages at the same time to several towns, recommending the people to receive the preacher who was coming amongst them.

For the remainder of that year, 1529, Farel went therefore from town to town, and from village to village, as far north as the Munster valley. You will find this valley in the map stretching across the country between Basle and the lake of Bienne. He went also to Lausanne. There, however, every door was closed. The Council of Lausanne were at first wining, even desirous, that he should preach, but the bishop and the priests were determined that he should not. Twice did Farel appear before the Council, asking leave to preach in the town. The Bernese sent a letter of commendation, desiring the Council to grant his request "And beware," they added, "that you do not touch a hair of his head."

But the Council of Lausanne had by this time learned more about the preaching and lives of the reformers. They had long been complaining loudly of the vices and crimes of the clergy, and would have been glad to oppose, them, could they have done so without having the gospel in exchange. But bad as were the profligate lives of the priests, they thought the strict lives of the gospel preachers more appalling. It was less terrible to them to have constant scenes of rioting and drunkenness, than to have no plays, no dances, no shows and processions, no gay parties gathered in the

taverns, no merrymakings on the saints' days. They therefore yielded to the bishop and the priests, and Farel went to preach elsewhere.

It was not difficult to find willing hearers. At one town after another crowds came together, anxious to know what the great preacher of the Pays de Vaud had to say. At Morat great numbers seem to have been truly converted. They gathered from distant villages, and arrived in troops from the mountains, warning one another by the way not to "fall into the heretic's trap." But as Farel preached, one after another were cut to the heart, and sat lost in wonder at the great and glad tidings. Like Whitefield, Farel saw their eyes fixed upon him with streaming tears, as he told them of the Saviour who had sent him. In Morat, and in many other places great multitudes believed.

The good councillors of Berne sent messages of encouragement to the converted people. They told them that, as far as in them lay, they would protect them from all ill-usage, they only desired them to cleave fast to the Lord. "Be not afraid," they said; "trust to the Lord, who has made heaven and earth, and who upholds all things by the word of His power. Only trust in Him, and leave Him to care for His own." On the other hand, the priests everywhere stirred up those who remained in unbelief, and there were often stormy scenes, to which Farel was by this time well inured. But they were glorious days, which well repaid him for toilsome journeys and rough treatment. Not a few of the priests themselves believed and were saved. All around were those to be found who were casting their idols to the moles and to the bats. And from many a village and mountain chalet the worship that is in spirit and in truth began at last to ascend to God.

The Bernese warned Farel not to proceed too hastily to the destruction of the images. Such measures should be taken deliberately, not in a moment of

excitement. And many might be found ready to drive away the priests and break the idols, who were not equally ready to take up the cross and follow Christ. It was wise advice which was given by the councillors of Berne. "Since you have received the Word of God, it is right and seemly that you should give to every man his due, and not go beyond your authority. For the Word of God does not preach liberty to the flesh, but liberty to the spirit, and to the conscience." So passed the last six months of the year 1529.

## Chapter 29

### THE LAND THAT REFUSED THE GOSPEL

**B**ut before I tell you of the last remarkable journey which Farel performed in that year, it is well to look back for a moment to the unhappy country which had refused his message, and driven him into exile. During the three years that had passed since Farel opened his little school at Aigle, tidings from France had reached him from time to time. Master Faber had been for a while living at Blois, under the protection of the Princess Margaret. He had been appointed tutor to the king's three younger children, Magdalen, Margaret, and Abed-Nego, and he was also keeper of the king's library in the castle of Blois.

Very soon after came the news that the Princess Margaret had married her second husband, Henry, king of Navarre. You will bear in mind that the kingdom of Navarre was at that time the south-western corner of France. King Henry, who was an indolent man, troubled himself but little about the popish religion he professed. Margaret was allowed to shelter at her court many of the gospel preachers, who gladly took refuge there. The king and queen of Navarre were at this time living in France, chiefly at the castle of

Blois, where Margaret learnt much from Master Faber, and was thankful to have his company. Louis Berquin as well as Master Faber found a home with Margaret. Gerard Roussel was also one of Margaret's household. He was her chaplain and court preacher. He had accustomed himself to "keeping back half the truths of the gospel," and he had his reward. But Louis Berquin was to have a reward of another sort, a "reward that is great in Heaven." Do you remember these glorious words? "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in Heaven."

Louis Berquin had no thought of keeping back a half or a quarter of the gospel he had believed. The Sorbonne and the priests watched him as a tiger would watch its prey. But the protection of the queen of Navarre served for a time to shield the brave young man, who not only declared his faith openly, but also openly attacked the sins and vices of the priests. "They have a cloak of religion," he said, "but it is only to hide the vilest passions, the most scandalous lives, and the most complete infidelity." In vain did Erasmus, and other friends, entreat him to keep silence. In vain did Margaret warn him that even her protection could not shelter him long, if he spoke thus openly and plainly.

At last, in the summer of 1528, an excuse was found for again seizing him. An image of the Virgin, in a street corner at Paris, was found one morning broken to pieces. This was the signal for a fresh attack on the "gospellers" in general, and Berquin in particular. King Francis himself was filled with horror at such an act of atrocity as the breaking of an image. He walked in a procession, followed by all the clergymen of Paris, carrying in

his hand a burning wax candle. He went bareheaded, to show his reverence for what remained of the broken image. When he reached the corner where it stood, he worshipped it “very devoutly,” as we are told.

He now allowed Louis Berquin to be imprisoned, without making any attempt, as before, to rescue him. Berquin was at once sentenced to do penance bareheaded, holding a candle in his hand, in the great court of the Louvre, the king’s palace. He was to ask pardon of God and the king. He was then to be led to the “Place de Grève,” where his books were to be burnt. Then to go to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, where he was to ask pardon of God, and of the Virgin Mary. He was then to have his tongue pierced through. He was then to be imprisoned in a dungeon for the rest of his life, without books or ink, or pen.

Crowds filled the streets that afternoon, to see the penance of Berquin, for it was to be performed at once. But Berquin did not appear. He had appealed to the king, and refused to leave his prison. Margaret entreated the king to save him. But the king took no notice of Berquin’s appeal—no notice even of Margaret’s entreaties. Berquin’s friends besought him to do the penance. “If you do not,” said his friend Budé,” they will sentence you to be burnt.” “I would rather be burnt,” replied Berquin,” than appear to join in a condemnation of the truth, were it by my silence only.” He was at once sentenced to be burnt alive.

On the 22nd of April, 1529, the officers of the Parliament entered his dungeon, and commanded him to follow them to the stake. It was prepared in the Place de Grève. An eye witness tells us, “there was not a sign of disturbance on his face as he walked along, he looked like a man lost in heavenly thoughts.” He spoke to the people as he stood at the stake, but his

voice was stifled by the noise that was made to drown it. His look of peace and joy was thus his last testimony.

Margaret was deeply grieved at the tidings of his death. Master Faber grieved deeply too, but Margaret's grief was sorrow for Berquin, Master Faber's was sorrow for himself. He could have wished himself in the place of the man who dared to die for Christ. From that time saint after saint perished in flames in that unhappy land. Before eighteen years more had passed, eighty-one of the martyrs of Jesus had been roasted over slow fires in the French cities. And long after that did the fire and the sword ravage the land, till thousands upon thousands of the saints of God had followed Louis Berquin into paradise, from that scene of blood. Such were the tidings that reached William Farel amongst the Swiss mountains. And the remembrance of John Leclerc, and Pavannes, and the Hermit, and Berquin, stirred him up to follow in the same glorious path, for to him the reward that is great in Heaven was precious. He mourned over Master Faber and Gerard Roussel, but when he thought of Louis Berquin, he thanked God and took courage.

Margaret now feared that Master Faber's turn would come next. She determined to take him to her castle of Nérac, in Navarre. He would there be out of the reach of his persecutors. She wrote to her cousin Montmorency, the master of the king's household, telling him that "the good Faber writes that he is not quite well at Blois. And for change of air he would gladly go for a time to stay with a friend, if it pleased the king to give him leave. He has put the library in order, numbered the books, and made an inventory of them, which he will give to any person the king pleases to name. I beg that you will ask leave from the king for this good

man. . . . You will be giving an especial pleasure to her, who is your good aunt and friend,—Margaret.”

The king gave leave, and Margaret carried off her old friend to spend the rest of his days in the quiet old castle of Nérac, where she now took up her abode instead of living in France. Gerard Roussel went with her, and, instead of a dungeon and a stake, he had a palace and a mitre, and lived and died Bishop of Oléron, in Navarre.



## Chapter 30

### THE SIEGE OF NEUCH Â TEL

**W**e will now return to the Swiss valleys, where we left Farel in the month of November, 1529.

He had preached and taught in spite of all opposition, and all difficulty and danger. For a great part of the time he had been labouring at his own cost. But for a little while back the lords of Berne had provided for his necessities. They first gave orders to their governor at Aigle “to supply him with food and drink, garments for his body, and other needful things.” And for the last year or more they had given to him, and to another preacher, Simon Robert, “a house, with a court and kitchen-garden, and two hundred florins.”

Farel had for a long while been single-handed, but had had the help, later on, of several preachers who were of more use than the lazy monk Christopher. One of these men was also a monk. He had been sent to Farel from Strasbourg, by his old friend, Capito. “I send you a brother,” said Capito, “whom I have set free from his monastic vows. The dyer, the tailor, and the barber, have all had their hand in this transformation, and now

behold our ancient monk, dressed like you, in a black coat. But to speak seriously, I think this brother will help you in preaching, for he is a Frenchman, and though he is simple, he is pious and willing.” So the ancient monk arrived at Aigle, and was soon rewarded for his labours by the honour of imprisonment for Christ’s sake.

The Bishop of Lausanne seized upon him, and shut him up in the prison of Lausanne, where he was cruelly tortured. Twice did the lords of Berne write to the bishop, desiring that he should be set free. The bishop promised to release him, though he had, he said, “been guilty of the double crime of perfidy and apostasy.”

But in spite of the bishop’s promises, the ancient man did not reappear. William Farel at last sent another preacher, also a monk, to Lausanne, to inquire what was become of him.

But all the answer the second monk received was that he deserved to be shut up in a dungeon himself. And forthwith the poor man was carried off to the castle of Chillon, and dragged down into that gloomy vault, which you may still see if ever you go to that beautiful old castle. And still you may see the pillar in the torture-room to which the Lord’s servants were fastened, there to be racked with pulleys, and burnt with red-hot irons. Just as in Lambeth Palace may you see these black marks upon the wooden walls and floor, telling tales of torture and death.

Very soon the governor of Chillon had a letter put into his hand from the lords of Berne—”We greatly regret,” they said, “that those persons, sent by us, are seized without cause, and cruelly tortured. We desire you to send back those persons into our lordship of Aigle, without delay. You had best consider that we will not suffer such outrage and violence. We know well that you seized the prisoner without any just or reasonable cause. Were he a

malefactor, as you say, our friend William Farel would not have taken him as a fellow-worker in the Word of God. We desire you to release him instantly, and henceforward to refrain from such violence, for we will not suffer it in any shape.”

The governor of Chillon knew that it was best to consider, and also to submit to anything that Berne might command. But what had become of “the ancient monk?” We find that a month later, the lords of Berne wrote to the Bishop of Lausanne, complaining that” the ancient man, John Clerc,” had, in spite of the bishop’s promises, been removed to the castle of Ripaille, where he was still a prisoner. Whether he was ever set free, I cannot tell you. Many of the Lord’s dear servants have passed from chains and dungeons to the paradise above. It may have been thus that he left the castle of Ripaille. We shall know some day.

And now, as time went on, Farel had had the joy of seeing the four Bernese parishes of the Pays de Vaud turned from their idols to the living God. During the last six months he had been able to rejoice over multitudes in other parts of western Switzerland, who had believed in the Lord Jesus, and received eternal life.

But there were three large towns where, as yet, the gospel had not been preached. These three towns were Lausanne, Neuchâtel, and Geneva. You will remember that Farel had twice attempted to preach at Lausanne. Twice he had been driven away unheard. He would go there again someday, if the Lord would make the way. But in the meantime he would turn his steps to the place towards which his thoughts had often turned—to the old town of Neuchâtel.

You will find Neuchâtel on the northern shore of the lake, which bears its name. It is a quiet, pleasant town, on the slope of the vine-clad hills, the

lake below, the steep hills of the Jura above it; and opposite, far away across the blue waters, the snowy peaks of the Alps, range behind range, stretching back as far as the great Mont Blanc amongst the mountains of Savoy. It was on a November day, in that year 1529, that a weather-beaten, sun-burnt man, with a red beard and flashing eyes, arrived, staff in hand, before the walls of Neuchâtel. "He had come," we are told, "to take possession of Neuchâtel in the name of the Lord Jesus."

There it stood, the old popish town, with its fine castle, and its churches, and its convents—five large convents—besides the great college of the canons, and these amongst them owned the land on every side. Everything was in the hands of the priests and monks, who had it all their own way, for the governor of Neuchâtel was all they could desire, an obedient servant of Rome. This governor, George de Rive, represented the real sovereign of Neuchâtel, Jeanne de Hochberg. She was the heiress of the counts of Neuchâtel, but had married a French prince, the Duke of Orleans, and she liked better to live a gay life in France than to be shut up in the quiet old castle of Neuchâtel, where, according to the simple manners of the Swiss, the kitchen was her state apartment, and the citizens' wives the only company. She was a vain, extravagant, pleasure-loving princess, and she was glad that George de Rive should look after everything at Neuchâtel and never trouble her about business, except to send her the revenues of the little state to spend in Paris.

Such was the condition of affairs when Farel arrived. He was well aware that the very sound of his name would rouse the priests and people into fury. He was known now far and wide as the great heretic preacher—the image-breaker—the blasphemer. And had his face been as well-known as his evil deeds, he might expect worse treatment than any he had yet

received. But Farel knew what he was doing when he thus invaded the dark old town. He brought with him the weapon before which “every high thing shall be cast down, which exalts itself against the knowledge of God.” He brought with him the Word which “is as fire, which is as a hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces,” and what could five convents, or five thousand convents, do against the power of the Lord, when His time was come to seek and to save the lost?

What was to be done first? How was Farel to begin the attack upon this stronghold of Satan? He turned his steps towards the little parsonage of Serrières. This village, which is the port of Neuchâtel, belonged not to Neuchâtel but to the town of Bienne, which had already, through Farel’s preaching, received the truth. And Farel had heard that the curate of Serrières, Emer Beynon by name,” had some liking for the gospel.” To him, therefore, he would go. Thus did God remember this solitary priest, in his little village, whose heart was longing after something better than the dead forms, and the senseless ceremonies of his church.

Emer Beynon had not yet made one step out of Rome. But God can see where there is but a spark of the light which shines from the face of Christ. And where but one ray has shone into the soul, that ray will shine forth. What light we have, we give out, and we can give out no more. No eloquence, no talent, no energy can ever make a spark of light shine forth, beyond that which has shone into the heart from God, and where there is but a longing of the soul for Christ, some light will go forth around. If you turn to the 6th verse of the 4th chapter of II. Corinthians, you will there see some words which are not perhaps very clearly translated in the English Bible—the verse expresses that “God has shone in our hearts, for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus

Christ” This was true of Paul, and true of all into whose hearts any way, however faint, of that wondrous light has shone. And from the poor earthen vessel, the village curate of Serrières, there shone forth light enough to guide the steps of Farel to the door which the Lord had opened.

It was a memorable day in the poor curate’s life, when the stranger knocked at the door of his little parsonage, and told him that he was William Farel. God had at last answered to the desire of his heart He not only received Farel gladly and welcomed him warmly, but immediately bethought himself how the preaching could at once begin. It would be a bold step to ask Farel to preach in his church. “And that, too, is forbidden,” he said; “but why not in the churchyard? No one has forbidden that—and then there are fields and hill-sides, which do just as well for preaching places as a little church.”

Farel lost no time. As the people came to the mass, he stood up, like John Wesley, at Epworth, on a stone in the churchyard, and there he preached the gospel. Crowds gathered around, and the tidings spread to Neuchâtel that the great heretic preacher was come. “But he preaches beautiful things,” said the people of Serrières; “he tells us of the love of God, and of Christ in Heaven.”

The citizens of Neuchâtel determined to hear for themselves, and throngs of men, women, and children poured out of the old town, and filled Emer Beynon’s churchyard. In vain the governor, the canons, the priests, and the monks, threatened and warned the people. These hungry souls seemed as though they could never hear enough. If ever you go to Neuchâtel, you may still see the stone which was Farel’s pulpit.

Amongst the citizens of Neuchâtel was a brave soldier, called James Wildermuth. He had heard of Farel’s preaching at Aigle, and at other places.

And, moreover, he had himself believed the glad tidings of the grace of God. Great was his joy when he was told that Farel was come. "The poor, pious Farel," he wrote to Berne, "has arrived here, and he presented a letter inviting those in the town to hear him preach the Word of Christ, which he would gladly have done with all his heart, but the authorities forbid it. Thereupon I went to the governor, George de Rive, to see what I could do." But George de Rive had no intention to allow a heretic to preach in the town. Whereupon, the brave James Wildermuth, with other citizens, determined to take the matter into their own hands. They went to find Farel. They led him in triumph through the old castle gate, along the steep street into the market place. There was the first gospel sermon preached in Neuchâtel.

You, who have often heard the glad tidings, who can never remember the time when you did not hear it, can hardly imagine how strange, how wonderful, and how blessed were those words of grace to these poor Swiss people. "That sermon," says the old Chronicle of Neuchâtel, "won many hearts." Around the preacher stood the wondering crowd—the weavers and the vine dressers, the merchants and the labourers—eager to catch every word. Farel spoke with a solemn reality, with an authority which awed them into silence. But suddenly a cry arose:—"Down with the heretic! kill him! Drown him in the fountain!" The monks had glided in amongst the throng, and they made a sudden rush upon the preacher. But Farel had now defenders enough. The monks soon found it would be at the risk of their lives, were they to harm the man whom God had sent.

## *Chapter 31*

### THE WORD THAT IS AS A HAMMER BREAKING THE ROCKS IN PIECES

**D**ay after day the preaching went on. "I keep Farel here," wrote James Wildermuth. "I make him preach in the houses, because I know that he can thus do good. It is true that I have to endure many threats in consequence, but I may well learn to disregard them, knowing that God is stronger than man or the devil." Not only in doors, but out of doors were the blessed tidings preached. The bitter winds of December, and the falling snow, were unable to hinder the crowds who gathered wherever Farel's voice was heard. If they but saw him in the street, they would throng around him. Each one had some question to ask, and, most of all, the great question Farel was so glad to answer:—"What must I do to be saved?"

You will like to hear Farel's own account of these happy days. He had been there scarcely a week when he thus wrote to his friend, the preacher at Noville, near Aigle:—"I would not have you ignorant, dear brethren, of the work which Christ is doing in His own. For against all hope He has here touched the hearts of several. Notwithstanding the tyrannical orders, and the enmity of the men with shaven crowns, numbers have come to hear the



Word preached in the city gates, in the streets, in barns, and in houses. They listened eagerly, and nearly all have believed what they heard, though it was the exact contrary to the errors so deeply rooted in their hearts. Therefore join with me in thanking the Father of mercies, and pray for greater blessing. I would gladly return to you at Aigle, but the glory of Jesus Christ and the thirst of His sheep compel me to go forward in the face of sufferings which tongue cannot tell. But Christ makes all things light to me. Oh, my friends, may His cause be to us the dearest thing we know!”

A few days after this, Farel was called away to Morat, where so many had been converted during the summer. The whole town had assembled to decide whether the mass should go on. The greater number carried the day. There was to be no more mass. The gospel alone was to be preached in the church. But as preaching is not worship, the people of Morat had now to consider how, besides the preaching, matters should be ordered so that those who believed in the Lord Jesus should worship God in simplicity. It was to talk over these matters that they desired to see Farel. Many in other towns also wished to see him, and thus the spring of 1530 passed by. His many adventures during that time would make a long story. We hear of Farel in one place after another, and we hear everywhere of the same blessing from God, and the same opposition from the enemy.

“Last Thursday,” on one occasion, wrote the lords of Berne to the Count of Gruyere, “ Master William Farel, passing through your country, lodged for the night at St. Martin, and the clergyman of the place, in company with two other priests, assaulted the said Farel, and the vicar reviled him with bad and abusive language, and hit him with a pot, and also struck our officer, who was with him, calling the said Farel a heretic and a devil, which insults we consider to have been directed at ourselves. You will

please to make inquiries as to these things, and to bestow the punishment that is due for such offences.”

This is but one of the many complaints addressed by the lords of Berne to those who had ill-treated Farel and other preachers. On the other hand, they received constant entreaties from the Bishop of Lausanne, and from their allies at Fribourg, who besought them to put a stop to the preaching. In consequence Farel had many warnings from Berne not to go too far—not to preach where he was not wanted—not to give offence - not to break images, or make commotions. Farel regarded these warnings just as much as he considered it right to do so. He did not profess to take his orders from any other than the Master who had sent him, and, though he was thankful for the protection of Berne, he did not consider that his friends there had a right to make his plans, or to limit his movements. “It would be well,” he said, “if the men of Berne were as zealous for the gospel as the men of Fribourg are for idolatry.”

In the month of April of that year, 1530, the priest of Tavannes was singing mass in the village church. Tavannes is a village not very far from Basle. As he sang, two men came into the church, and one of them, going up into the pulpit, began to preach. The priest had no need to be told that it was William Farel. The other man, who was very young, only eighteen or nineteen years old, was Anthony Boyve. Do you remember Anthony Boyve, of Dauphiné? Some say he was a cousin of Farel’s, but I do not know that there is any good reason for saying so, nor do I know why he is generally called by the name of Anthony Froment from the time of his arrival in Switzerland, but by this name you will henceforth hear of him.

He tells us that the sermon at Tavannes was with “such might and power, that no sooner was it ended than the people rose up with one accord and

broke down both images and altars.” The priest fled in dismay. The people of Tavannes then wrote to the lords of Berne. “We thank you humbly,” they said, “that you have sent us a preacher to declare to us the holy gospel of God, which we have received, and desire, God helping us, to live according to the same.”

The Bishop of Basle soon heard of these strange doings. He, too, wrote an epistle to the lords of Berne. A man named Farel,” he said, “is roaming in our diocese and vomiting forth insults against our person, which, doubtless he did not learn in the gospel. He attempts to spread his doctrine amongst our subjects” (the bishop was also prince of a large territory); “he pretends he has a commission from you; but we cannot suffer a stranger to come and sow trouble and discord amongst our people, and hold us up to contempt. A lesser than we would not submit to this. We earnestly request that you will desire the said Farel to leave our country in peace, and to content himself with preaching where he is wanted, and where there are people who find pleasure in hearing him. Otherwise, if he persists, bloodshed might follow, and we should then act, as the case requires, in order to rid ourselves of his presence.”

But Farel was as deaf to the bishop’s complaints as was the bishop to the gospel of God, and the preaching went on as before.

It may interest you to read an account written by a Roman Catholic of this eventful time. It is as follows:—

“Farel had a belief in a voice from heaven, which called to him, ‘Forward!’ and forward did he go, resistless as death. He troubled himself neither for red or blue vestments, nor for mantles of ermine, nor for robes of silk, nor for coronets of dukes, nor crowns of kings, nor for holy vessels, nor for pictures, nor for images. All were alike to him as the dust of the

ground. History, Christian art, traditions, and forms were only matter to him for insolent mockery. Hoist him up on a railing, he will carry away every passer-by with the magic of his preaching. Take him down into the mines of Mansfeld, and every workman will leave his anvil to hang upon his words and follow his steps. Put him into a pulpit surrounded by images, at once he will fall upon them with a knife or a hammer till he has utterly destroyed every trace of what he calls an idol. Montbéliard, Aigle, and Bienne, stirred up by his words, drove away their monks, and set up a new worship. If he only passed through a town, the inhabitants were sure to come to blows with another. ‘The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence’ he would say, and forward he went in his remorseless work of noise and ruin. The magistrates themselves, utterly frightened by his doings, dared not keep him in their hands. The revolution finished, they opened to him the gates of the town, and Farel, perfectly happy, took his pilgrim’s staff, and went off on foot across the mountains to find another city or village where his voice might awaken a fresh tempest. His stick meanwhile battered down along the roadsides alike crosses of Christ and the images of Mary.”

## *Chapter 32*

### HIS GLORIOUS POWER

**I**n the month of June Farel appeared again at Neuchâtel. Anthony Froment came with him. During the six months of his absence many more of the people of Neuchâtel had turned to the Lord. Farel began again to preach in the streets, and in private houses. But one day the people led him to the hospital. They said he should preach to them in the hospital chapel. In vain did the priests attempt to block the way. Like a mighty wave the people pressed in, Farel in their midst. “Long ago,” said Farel, “the Son of God came down from Heaven—it was amongst the poor, and in a stable, that He was welcomed on the earth—and here, at Neuchâtel, His welcome is amongst the poor and the maimed in a hospital.” There amongst the poor and the maimed was the gospel now to be preached. Farel spoke of Christ, the living Saviour in Heaven. The poor people listened in joy and wonder.

“And now,” said Farel, “what do we, who have a living Christ, need with these dead images and pictures? Let us cast them away, and have in their place the living God and Saviour.”

With his own hands he then took down the crucifix, the images, and the pictures which adorned the chapel. The people carried them out, and destroyed them.

The governor now thought it was time to bestir himself. He called the citizens to account for these outrages. But they, in their turn, appealed to the Council of Berne, who sent messages to the governor, and to Farel. To the governor they said that they desired that amongst all their allies, liberty of conscience should be allowed. They would see to it if it were withheld from the people of Neuchâtel. To Farel they said that he must be careful not to use force, nor to attempt more than the bold preaching of the gospel, as he had no authority to make any changes in the town of Neuchâtel. They must be made by the citizens themselves, if they were brought to believe the gospel. The governor, who knew how needful it was for the little state to have the protection of Berne, dared make no further opposition to the preaching. He could only look on in displeasure and grief. And the preaching, therefore, continued in the town and in the villages round.

Not long ago there was still to be seen a memorial of those wanderings. Some village artist painted in a rough way on a cottage wainscot the picture of the preacher who was come amongst them. This rude picture was preserved with care till a few years since. "It represented," we are told, "the preacher on his journeys, stick in hand, in a dress poor and mean, just as he had been seen travelling through the valleys, exhorting, encouraging, praying with his people, spending, and being spent for them. He had no doctor's robe, no doctor's cap; he was nothing, he would be nothing but the messenger of Him who preached the gospel to the poor, and who had not where to lay His head." Such was the servant the Lord had sent.

Thus the summer days passed by—and in the meantime many lost sinners were saved—many blind eyes were opened —many who were athirst came and drank of the water of life freely. Amongst them were three priests of the college. Emer Beynon now dared to come forward and confess his faith in Christ. But so many of his parishioners were converted, it caused far more joy than grief in the village of Serrières. “You have sometimes called me a good priest,” said Emer Beynon, “I hope you will find me a better pastor.”

A great day was now at hand in the town of Neuchâtel. It was on the 23rd of October, of that year (1530) that Farel was preaching, as was his wont, in the hospital chapel. He said he was glad to preach there;” but yet,” he said,” it is sad that the mass is still honoured in Neuchâtel more than the gospel. In the large church which holds so many, the mass is sung. In this little chapel, where so few can listen, the gospel is preached.” At these words his hearers rose in a body. “The gospel shall be preached in the great church!” they said; and, moving as one man, they seized upon Farel and carried rather than led him through the streets, up to the great church in the upper town.

We are told much of the grandeur and wealth of this large and ancient church. ‘It contained no less than thirty chapels, ranged around the nave and choir. Twenty-five altars glittered with gold and jewels; images and pictures stood all around. Many were the saints who were worshipped there. But till these blessed days no glad tidings of great joy had ever sounded in those solemn aisles. Masses had been sung there, candles had been burnt there—plays had been acted there on the great festivals. Such were the sermons of popery, acted and spoken dramas, where monks and priests, men, women, and boys, acted the parts of prophets and apostles, of David and of Judas, of Esther and of Adam, in strange confusion.

There, dressed in gaudy finery, might be seen on these festival days a medley of the men and women of Bible history, and of later history, and of no history at all—St. George and the dragon; St. Christopher the giant; St. Peter, and St. Paul; and, awful to say, the Lord Himself. These were the lessons given to the people of Neuchâtel. Nothing wiser, nothing better had been heard or seen in the “good old times,” in that beautiful old church. But a new day had dawned. “It was a crowd of earnest men who now pressed into the great door, and who led Farel in their midst. The priests and monks shrunk back in helpless fear. Farel went up into the pulpit, and looked around on the glittering finery of the altars and chapels. He looked down on the eager faces of those who were thirsting for the living water. He looked up to Christ in Heaven. And he preached, says the chronicle, the “mightiest sermon that he ever yet had preached in Neuchâtel.” He told the people how far they had wandered from the one living way—he told them of the one Saviour for sinners, and of the one true worship which the saints of God can offer up in spirit and in truth.

Suddenly a cry arose in the crowd below, which was taken up by one and another till it echoed from every corner of the great church—” We will follow Christ, and the gospel, and in that faith alone will we and our children live and die.” And then, rising altogether as one man, they fell upon the altars and the images, upon the pictures and the crucifixes, and shattered them upon the pavement. The honoured image of the Virgin, set up by the mother of the Countess Jeanne, shared the fate of the rest. Not an altar, not an image was left standing. The golden vessels used for the mass, and for the incense, were thrown over the churchyard wall into the streets of the lower town. The holy wafers were divided amongst the people, and they



ate them there and then,” to shew,” said they, “that they are nothing more than bread.”

In vain did George de Rive appear amongst them. His voice was unheard amidst the tumult.

There were four priests who were in charge of the church; but strange to say, they, too, were to be seen breaking the images and overthrowing the altars. “For it is plain,” they said, “that Master Farel has the Bible on his side.” That mighty sermon had not only cast down the idols of wood and stone, but the idolatry of the hearts of men.

The people of Neuchâtel then put up a brass plate, on which these words were written, “This year, 1530, the 23rd day of October, idolatry was removed and abolished by the citizens.” If you ever go to Neuchâtel, you may still see that brass plate, with those memorable words, on a pillar on the left of the communion table, in the great church on the hill. There was also an inscription put up over the pulpit, as follows: —” When the sun of October 23rd arose, there arose also the sun of life for the town of Neuchâtel.” For 600 years had the old church resounded with Latin masses and idolatrous prayers, and now, “in one hour was the judgment come.” Not a trace was left of the dark ages of the past.

## *Chapter 33*

### THE DAWN OF THE DAY

**I**t is not for us to judge how much of the energy of the flesh, how much of human excitement there was in that day's work of which I have told you in the Cathedral of Neuchâtel. No doubt the instruments thus used by God were imperfect and liable to err; but that it was God's work we cannot doubt, if the Scriptures are true, and if the God is unchanged whose solemn words we read, spoken of the idols of older times. "The graven Images of their gods shall ye burn with fire; thou shall not desire the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein, for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it, but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it, for it is a cursed thing."

And it is God Himself, who has written the history of those older days, when idols were broken and altars were cast down, even as on that October day at Neuchâtel. You will find in one book in the Bible no less than six kings mentioned whom God has thus remembered with words of praise, because they did the same work of destruction in obedience to Him.

Do you say those were images of heathen gods, and it was therefore a different thing from breaking the images of Mary, and of Christ Himself? It is true it is a different thing; but the difference is, that it is a less terrible crime in the eyes of God to fall down before a heathen idol, than to mix up His holy Name with images of wood and stone, and, above all, to say of a piece of bread," that is "—not that represents—" God Himself." No heathen idolatry has reached that depth of sin. The heathen says that his idol represents his god. The Papist says the wafer is his God. And with regard to the images, if I know by the Holy Ghost within me the living Christ in Heaven, I shall shrink with greater horror from an image of Him made by the hands of man than from a block of wood or stone which represents a god that does not exist. There is a profaning of His holy name in the first instance, which there is not in the latter, abominable as both are in the sight of God. And if we know anything of the living God, if we have any care for His honour, any reverence for His holy name, we shall thank and praise Him even now for that day's work in the great church of Neuchâtel.

But what had the priests and canons and the monks of the five convents been about all this time? Had they been asleep whilst the gospel had thus been preached day after day, from June till the end of October? They had been fully awake and alive. They had sent messengers to Berne entreating the Bernese to deliver them from Farel. They had forbidden the people to listen to him. They had carried him early in the summer before a magistrate, and had had him fined to the amount of 10,000 crowns. This, they said, was but a just punishment for his having stuck up placards, saying that the priests were thieves, murderers, and deceivers of the people. Farel had replied to this that it was not he who stuck up the placards. At the same time, if they desired him to deny that the priests were thieves and

murderers, he must decline to do so. “For is not,” he said,” a man who extorts money on false pretenses a thief? And if you call a man a murderer who only kills the body, how much more is he a murderer who destroys souls by his evil teaching, and keeps perishing sinners from Christ?”

The citizens had then demanded of the priests that they should hold a public discussion with Farel. “If he is wrong,” they said,” at least let us hear what you have to say. Tell us, in the name of God, what proof there is that he is a heretic. Speak either for him or against him, and let us hear both sides.”

But the priests were silent. The citizens had then sent to the canons a paper containing their reasons for believing Farel was right. Not one of the priests contradicted this paper. They treated it only with silent contempt. And thus had the citizens been brought at last to see that nothing was to be hoped for from the priests. It was no use to ask their leave or advice any more. Some of the people had even before the 23rd of October broken some images in the streets in order to force the priests to speak their mind. But all was in vain.

And now the hour had come when the priests were to be appealed to no more. The people of Neuchâtel found themselves on that wonderful day face to face with God. It was with Him they had to do. And the priests felt themselves as nothing in the presence of that mighty power which heeded them not. Those of them who were not convinced by all they then saw and heard fled in terror, and Neuchâtel was free.

It was not yet a year since the “poor, pious Farel” “had come, in the power of the Holy Ghost, to take Neuchâtel for Christ” And how had God led him on to that wonderful moment, when he saw the last idol demolished, the last priest go forth from Neuchâtel, never to return! And now, with none to

hinder, he could preach the glad tidings, ‘and thank God day by day for souls “added to the Lord.”

None to hinder! Was there not still George de Rive? But he, poor man, was now utterly helpless. He wrote to the Princess Jeanne to tell her of the dreadful day when the images had been destroyed. He said it was useless for him to say anything to people who declared that in the matter of their faith God alone was their ruler. All that he could do he had done: that was, to lock up in the castle all the ornaments which he could find in the private chapel of the princess. He had stored away there her images and her chapel organ. He had also provided a refuge in convents at a distance, for the priests and canons and chorister boys. He could do no more.

The Princess Jeanne took no notice of this letter. She cared too little for the quiet, old-fashioned town, which she never wished to see again. They might do anything they liked there, provided she got her revenues paid when they were due. In the following April she sent her youngest son, Francis, to make sure that the people of Neuchâtel still owned their allegiance to her. Francis was quite satisfied that they were loyal subjects, and when those of the citizens who were still papists entreated him to restore the old worship, he gave them to understand that he did not come to meddle with religion— they must settle that as best they could.

And so the last hope of the papists vanished. They were the smaller and the weaker party now. They had to be silent.

Meanwhile, two tables for the breaking of bread had been placed in the church instead of the broken altar. A plain pulpit was fixed against a pillar. There Farel preached with none to hinder. “Here,” he said, “you can now offer up the worship the Father delights in. You can worship Him at last in Spirit and in truth. The great Sun of Righteousness, Jesus Christ, and the

glory of His gospel need none of our lighted incense, none of our candles and tapers! The anti-Christ, who has nothing to show but vileness, darkness, and corruption, has need to seek for all he can find to give a lustre to his devilries. Jesus, who is the truth, rejects all that. He Himself is enough, and nothing more is needed. Accursed by God are all those things which are called His service, but which He has not Himself commanded. Let us pray to the good Lord Jesus, that He may make of us an Assembly pure and holy, purged from everything which He has not ordained, so that nothing may be seen amongst us but Jesus only, and that which He has commanded; and may it be seen purely and simply as He commanded it, so that, we in Him and He in us, by living faith we may serve and honour our blessed God and Father, who lives and reigns eternally with the Son and with the Holy Ghost”

George de Rive himself was convinced that the cause of popery was lost. He took the votes of the citizens one by one, as to whether the mass should be restored. The town waited anxiously to know the result. There were eighteen more votes on the side of the gospel than on the side of the mass. There was, therefore, to be mass no more. The governor himself and the magistrates of the town set their seals to this decision. The governor then rose and said:—” I promise to do nothing to oppose the decision of this day, for I am myself witness that all has been done fairly and justly, without threatening or compulsion.”

Thus was the matter set at rest from that day to this.

And it is worthy of remark that, in the letter written by the governor to the Princess Jeanne, and in all other accounts given by him of these great events, the name of Farel is not mentioned. The destruction of the images, the change of worship, the cessation of the mass, were all described by the

governor as the work of the citizens. Nor did the citizens themselves bring forward Farel as their authority for what they had done. The voice which had spoken to them was from other lips; it was the voice which speaks from Heaven. Christ had His sheep in that barren corner of the wilderness, and His sheep had followed Him, for they knew His voice. “The enlightenment of the Holy Ghost,” said the citizens,” and the holy teaching of the gospel, as we find it in the Word of God, have proved to us that the mass is an abuse without any use and that it serves more for the damnation than for the salvation of souls. We are ready to prove and to certify that in demolishing the altars we have only done that which was right and pleasing to God.”

Yes, in the presence of God Himself, Farel was lost sight of. It was the voice of God that had spoken. It was the light of God that had shone down from the glory upon that dark old town, and in the glory of that light Farel was no longer seen. “The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus had eclipsed everything. The stars, as well as the darkness of night, disappear before the sun.”

It has been said of Paul, “Such as he are chords on which God strikes, and on which He produces a wondrous music; but Christ is the music itself?”

Farel had had to learn in that dark, wet night, near Strasburg, how little he could do. He now learnt the lesson which follows—what mighty works Christ could do. But the first lesson must always be learnt first, or we shall never become “the chord upon which the music of God can sound.”

It would be worse than useless to tell you this story if it were to prove to you how great a man was Farel. But the highest honour any man can have is this — that when his history is told it is a tale of the greatness and the love of God. May this be your history and mine!

## Chapter 34

### THE OLD COUNTESS AND HER SUBJECTS

I must now tell you a story of a day in the month of August that was past. The second capital of the little state of Neuchâtel was the small town of Valangin. This town had long been a stronghold of popery—more so, perhaps, than Neuchâtel had been—for it was under the despotic rule of the lady of the castle, who, unlike the Princess Jeanne, lived on the spot, and had it all her own way.

This old lady had a zeal for popery which was equalled only by her intense hatred of “the gospellers.” She had heard of Farel, and looked upon him as a sort of fiend. The old chronicles say much of the “piety” of this old lady. When the count, her husband, died, she had sent for one hundred priests who were to sing mass for his soul in purgatory. For one whole year she had given a dinner every Friday to five lepers, and to each one a silver penny besides his dinner. This was to atone for the harm which the dead count had done, by hunting over the corn-fields of his subjects. The countess gave away much money to the poor in the villages around. “She kept up a noble state,” we are told, “and when the Countess of Gruyères and



other noble ladies came to visit her, they would all dance together to the sound of the fife and the tambourine.”

The name of this old countess was Guillemette de Vergy. Her steward and councillor, Claude de Bellegarde, vied with her in his hatred of the gospel preaching. If this fortress of popery could be also “taken for Christ,” it must be His work alone.

Close to the town of Valangin was the little village of Boudevilliers. This village belonged not to Countess Guillemette, but to the town of Neuchâtel. It was on a great festival day, August 15th, in that summer of 1530, that the peasants from the hills and the valleys around, were flocking to the church of Boudevilliers. Amongst them came a stranger with a grave and resolute countenance. There came with him a lad of eighteen or twenty years old. The priests and choristers were already singing mass at the high altar, and the church was filled with worshippers when the two strangers came in. The elder man went straight up into the pulpit, and, regardless of the singing, he told the astonished people that there was a Saviour for them in Heaven, Christ, the Son of God.

Some who were there knew the face of the preacher—they had seen and heard him in the streets of Neuchâtel. And there were some who were glad he was come.

The priest took no notice of this strange interruption. He perhaps sang all the louder. He, too, may have recognized the flashing eyes of William Farel. At last the moment came when the priest sang out the words of consecration. The bell rang, which was to tell that the wafer was now changed into God Himself. The priest held up the wafer in its golden case, and the crowd of peasants fell down and worshipped before it. All fell down on their knees but one man only. This was the lad who had come with Farel

—our old friend, Anthony Froment. The voice of Farel was silent for a moment

Suddenly Anthony Froment sprang through the kneeling crowds—he crossed the church—he went up the altar-steps—he took the wafer from the hands of the priests, and himself held it aloft before the people. “It is not this god of paste that you must worship!” he said.” The living Christ is up there, in Heaven, in the glory of the Father. Worship Him!”

There was a dead silence. The people remained motionless upon their knees. The priest stood as if thunderstruck. Then the voice of Farel was heard again—” Yes,” he said, “Christ is in Heaven. The Heavens have received Him until the times of the restitution of all things. And it is this Christ in Heaven who has sent me here. It is of Him. I come to speak.” And as the people listened in solemn wonder, Farel preached to them of that living Saviour who had died, and who had risen again, that they might have forgiveness of sins and everlasting life.

This sermon was not a long one. The terrified priest, on recovering his senses, had fled to the belfry-tower. He there rang the alarm bell with might and main. A crowd from Valangin and the villages around gathered round the church. The priest led them on to the attack upon Farel and Anthony. This army of recruits far outnumbered the village congregation.

How Farel and Anthony escaped I cannot tell you. The old chronicle only says, “God delivered them.” This is the best explanation that can be given. But their perils were not yet over. Their only road lay straight through the town of Valangin. The streets were already filled with excited crowds, who had been aroused by the alarm-bell of Boudevilliers. A narrow side path turned off, and led round the massive walls of the old castle. Farel and Anthony ran along this path. But before they could get round the castle their

enemies caught sight of them. A volley of stones flew at them immediately, and some twenty of their pursuers — priests, men, and women, rushed upon them, armed with clubs and sticks.

“These priests,” says the old chronicle, “were certainly not afflicted with gout, either in their feet or hands. They battered the two gospellers till they had nearly made an end of them.”

In the meantime the old countess, hearing the unwonted shouts, had rushed out upon the castle terrace. The news of Anthony’s crime had already reached her, and with joy she saw that both Anthony and Farel were now in the hands of the vigorous priests. “To the river! To the river!” cried the old lady. “Drown the Lutheran dogs! They have insulted the good God!” She meant the wafer. The priests followed the countess’s advice. They dragged their prisoners to the river Seyon, which was rushing below the castle walls. At this moment some neighbouring peasants came up. They were returning from Neuchâtel. They knew Farel by sight, and saw that in another moment all would be over with him. “Why do you drown those men?” they said. “Lock them up till they can be called to trial for their actions. You will find out by that means who is on their side.” This clever advice saved the two prisoners. The priests carried them back to the castle.

They had to pass on the way a chapel of the Virgin Mary. They dragged Farel and Anthony into this chapel. “Kneel down and worship our Lady,” they said, pointing to the image upon the altar. “The one true God is to be worshipped,” replied Farel, “and the one God only. He is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth — He alone — not dumb images, without life or power.” The priests fell upon Farel, and beat him with their sticks. Long after the marks of his blood were shown on the bespattered walls of the chapel. The two prisoners were then carried more dead than alive into the

old castle, where they were locked up in the lowest dungeon. They must have remembered Paul and Silas at Philippi.

What next the old lady and the priests would have done to them we cannot tell, for the news of their imprisonment had speedily reached the town of Neuchâtel, and a strong body of the citizens appeared before the castle of Valangin, demanding that the two prisoners should be immediately delivered up to them. The old countess dared not refuse. She was afraid of the displeasure of Berne.

It must have been three or four months later that she and Farel met again. It was again a festival time, just about Christmas. The countess had gone to mass in the parish church of Valangin. Scarcely had she arrived, when Farel, with some friends from Neuchâtel, walked boldly into the church. Farel went up into the pulpit, and, deaf to the exclamations of the angry countess, he began there and then to preach the gospel. The countess gave orders to stop him, but the people rose up as one man, and said, "We will have the gospel of Christ. We will hear Master Farel."

The countess left the church, and returned in wrath and terror to the castle. "I am sure," she said, "all that is not in the old gospels, and, if there are any new ones that make people do such things as that, it's more than I can understand."

But, in spite of the people who wished to have the gospel, the old lady had her way for a year longer. Mass was sung, and the gospel was banished. The church was locked up if any gossellers were thought to be near at hand.

The old lady wrote an imploring letter to the lords of Berne, entreating them to protect her against the preachers. She said, "I am resolved never to leave the faith of God and the Church, but in that faith I mean to live and die, without making any changes. Howbeit, last Saturday, some people of

Neuchâtel, going with Farel, broke down a cross upon my chapel below the castle. And the said Farel came to preach before my church, without being asked by the greater number of the townspeople; and on Sunday at Dombresson, when the priest was going to say mass, behold, instead of the mass, the said Farel preached. And afterwards they broke and spoilt the images in the church: and not content with that, they went to other churches to preach, without the consent of the good people. And yesterday the said Farel, at Angollon, stopped the mass in the middle of the service in order that he might preach. . . . And I know not to whom to complain but to God and to you; and I pray that you will give orders that such outrages should cease, and that you will punish those that have thus offended; otherwise I shall know that the world is a new one, wherein rulers are oppressed, and justice is at an end, and truth and loyalty lost and gone. And I beseech you not to be displeased at this entreaty, made by a poor old lady, your citizen, thus tormented in her old age.”

In a few days came an answer from Berne. “As to punishing those,” said the lords of Berne, “who have committed no other offence than attending the preaching of the gospel, and who thereupon broke and burnt the idols, know that we will do nothing of the sort, for it would be fighting against God. It would be best for you to attend to the advice we gave you before.” This advice was that the old lady should leave the preachers in peace, and allow them convenient places to preach in. “And,” added the lords of Berne,” we pray to God to give you grace to discern the errors and seductions of anti-Christ”

The poor old countess had no intention of following the advice of Berne. She bestirred herself all the more to hinder the preaching, and to get rid if possible of Farel and Anthony.

But a day came when a preacher appeared in the marketplace of Valangin. Some say it was Farel—some, that it was Anthony Marcourt, the first pastor of Neuchâtel. All the people ran together, rejoiced to hear the preaching which had so spoken to their hearts a year before in the old church. The countess from her castle tower saw what was happening. She sent her servants to insult the preacher. But so vile were the insults of those wretched men, that suddenly the crowd rushed forward with shouts of anger. They broke open the doors of the great church, and there and then broke down the images, demolished the altars, shattered the painted windows, trod the relics of the saints underfoot, and left no trace to tell of the old days of idolatry. They then rushed upon the houses of the priests and canons. They wished to call them to account for their opposition to the gospel. The poor priests fled to hide in the woods. But the day was remembered when they had beaten Farel with their sturdy arms. Their houses were plundered of all that told the tale of obedience to the pope.

The countess and her wicked steward, Claude de Bellegarde, saw this awful scene from the castle tower. They could do nothing. They saw the furious crowd turn from the canons' houses, and take the steep road up to the castle gates. What was now to happen? The countess saw that she was in their power, and that resistance would be worse than useless. But they had not come to harm her. They only demanded that the servants should be punished for their insults to the preacher. The countess had to consent to this.

The citizens then declared that Valangin should be free for ever from the rule of the pope, and free it has remained from that day to this. The countess was allowed to have mass in the castle chapel, but there was to be no more mass, and there was to be gospel preaching, in the church of Valangin.

## *Chapter 35*

### “IN WEARINESS AND PAINFULNESS”

**B**ut we must now return to William Farel at Neuchâtel. He was far from thinking that his work there was done when the images were broken and the mass was stopped. On the contrary, this had but cleared the way for the work that he had at heart. Having now pulled down, he could begin to build up. And this was a far more laborious work. It needed a toil and patience far beyond that required for the work of pulling down. Besides, there was not nearly so much to shew for it in the eyes of man. To those whose motive was nothing higher than hatred of priestcraft and tyranny, Farel seemed to be nothing but a conquering hero. They compared the light and freedom which had broken in with the old days of darkness and bondage, and could see nothing but victory and triumph. But Farel's eyes were not turned backward upon the things that were behind. He was “reaching forth unto those things which are before.” His eyes were fixed upon Christ in the glory. It was by Him he measured all. It was not with blinded Papists that he now compared his converts, but with that holy and righteous One at God's right hand.

And, therefore, whilst some might think he had now reaped the fruit of his labours, he was, in his own eyes, as the husbandman who waiteth for the precious fruit, and hath long patience for it. A mighty task yet lay before him, but it was one in which he could say he was a worker together with God.

He wrote at this time to a friend, “Christ can now be preached with perfect freedom. But when we consider how long is the race which has yet to be run, how far souls are yet from Christian purity, and simplicity, and love, we can only say things are as yet in an evil state. How many weeds must yet be rooted out before the ground can receive the good seed! How many sufferings, and toils, and dangers are yet to be braved! How many mighty enemies are yet to be overcome! Labourers are needed who can indeed endure hardness, and who are content to sow without depending upon a rich harvest.”

It was not easy for Farel to find such fellow-labourers as he needed. Paul had to mourn in his day “that all seek their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ’s.” And so it has been since, with the exception of one here and there, to whom Christ has become not the first only but the only One. Farel wrote to several friends, entreating them for Christ’s sake to come and help him. So many towns and villages now needed preachers and teachers, there would be work enough for a host of faithful men.

“I do not promise you mountains of gold,” he wrote to one, “but trials and troubles no words can tell; not leisure, but work—no rest till the day’s work is done, no reward but in the time to come, and in the time present to live at your own cost. Truly the field is large and the door is open, but only to those who desire to feed the flock and not to live upon the flock. Besides which, I can offer you shame and reproach, ingratitude for patient service,



evil in return for the good you have laboured to bestow. I do not say this to frighten you, but rather to arouse you, as a noble soldier is aroused when he hears of enemies who are not small and weak, but great and strong— who is prepared to go into the battle to fight, quitting himself as a man, but trusting to God alone for strength and victory. For the battle is not ours, but the Lord's."

In another letter he says, "What more have I to tell you, except that the harvest is great and the labourers are few; that I have nothing to offer you but trouble and toil, and nothing to hold out, except that if the Lord is not true to His promise we are of all men the most miserable? The Lord does not leave us without bread when we have done the day's work: but it is not bread of a dainty sort, and we take it just as His goodness gives it. I don't want to tell you falsehoods, so there is the truth for you. May Christ deign Himself to teach you, my beloved, how your life can best be spent for His glory."

This friend, whose name was André, was by no means frightened at the prospect Farel put before him. He would have come at once, but his wife did not feel tempted by Farel's offers of trouble and hard fare. Farel wrote again—"If God has given you the gift of preaching the gospel, beware lest you bury your talent. Instead of listening to your wife, listen to your God. You will have to give account to God for the souls that are in darkness and bondage, whom your voice might teach and lead to Christ. Do not be frightened because I have no salary to offer you. It is a sweet thing to be poor, to suffer want, —yes, and to die for the Lord Jesus."

André sent the best answer he could to this letter—that is to say, he came himself, and brought his wife with him; "and up to this present day," says

the Chronicle, “he is one of the faithful friends and fellow-labourers of Master Farel.”

As Farel had to travel about, it was needful that the people of Neuchâtel should not depend upon him alone for teaching. The pastor who went to preach at Valangin, Anthony Marcourt, took up his abode therefore at Neuchâtel, and Farel also took care to provide a schoolmaster, who should train the children in the faith of the gospel. He now felt free to go elsewhere.

## *Chapter 36*

### FATHER MICHAEL'S SERMON

**T**owards the frontier of France, amongst steep mountains and dark pine woods, lay the town of Orbe. This town belonged to the two cities of Berne and Friburg.

Berne had, as you know, been the great defender of the gospellers. Friburg remained a popish town. But the lords of Berne had some little while back compelled the government of Friburg to sign an agreement that, in all towns belonging to either city, the gospel should be preached, and the mass done away with, provided that most of the inhabitants wished it to be thus. If, on the contrary, most of them were papists, the gospel was not to be hindered amongst those who desired to hear it, and the gospellers were to be free to worship God as they thought best.

Orbe was still a popish town. The gospel had never yet been heard there. Priests and monks had none to oppose them. It was just at the end of this eventful year, 1530, that an indulgence-seller arrived at Orbe. He had come, as you know, to sell indulgences, or pardons, for any who had committed crimes, or even who meant to commit them, and wished to get a pardon

beforehand, as you get a ticket for a railway journey. “An indulgence for every crime, past or future!” cried the merchant, as a crowd collected round him in the market-place of Orbe. And as the people pressed nearer, the merchant saw, with some misgiving, a man with a red beard and piercing eyes. He felt afraid of this man, he knew not why.

The man came forward. “Have you a pardon,” he said, “for a man who is going to kill his father or mother?”

The merchant was at a loss for an answer. The man’s eyes now flashed fire. He sprang upon the stone basin of the fountain close by, and in a voice of thunder he preached to the astonished people of God’s judgment upon sin; and how One had borne that judgment, and had gone up into the glory, and now gave full forgiveness and remission of sins without money and without price—without price, for He had paid the price by His own precious blood; and woe to all those who turned from Him to seek pardon from sinful men—from men who desired only to grow rich upon their ignorance and folly.-

There were two men of Orbe who were glad to hear this blessed preaching—one was a schoolmaster called Mark Romain, the other was a tradesman called Christopher Holard.

The strange preacher then disappeared, and some months passed by. Lent came, the Lent of 1531. But the preaching at the fountain was not forgotten by the priests and monks.

There were two convents in the town of Orbe. The one was a convent of Carmelite monks, the other a nunnery of the nuns of St. Clara. These two convents were divided from one another by the parish church; they were joined to one another by a secret passage. It often happened thus that nuns, who professed to be shut up from the world, found plenty of company

amongst the monks in neighbouring convents. Thus we read of a convent near Paris, where the nuns would invite into their beautiful garden the monks from a convent hard by, and have dances and other amusements upon the smooth lawns.

The nuns at Orbe had amongst their friends a priest called Michael Juliani. They entreated him to preach during Lent against the u new religion.” Father Michael was delighted to find that the church was crowded with hearers. There were two or three amongst them, who not only listened attentively, but took notes on pieces of paper which they carried in their books. Father Michael did not know these notes were to be sent to Berne, where his sermons would find few admirers. You will have supposed that amongst those who took these notes were Mark Romain and Christopher Holard.

There was also a lad of whom you have not yet heard, who longed to hear Father Michael contradicted, and to hear the gospel preached. The name of this young man was Peter Viret. He was then nineteen years old. His father, William Viret, was a citizen of Orbe, and was also a cloth-dresser and tailor. Peter, who had always been a studious boy, had persuaded his father to send him, when he was only twelve years old, to be taught at the great University of Paris. He hoped that he might someday be a priest He was remarked at Paris for his love of learning, and also for his devotion to saints and images. But he had not been there long, when, by some means unknown to us, his eyes were opened to see the Lord Jesus Christ. You will remember that there were meetings at Paris before and after Farel was driven away. There were those who knew the glad tidings, and who desired to make them known to others. Some say Farel himself, in his last visit to Paris, had met with Peter Viret; but there is no proof of this. All we know is that, in some

way, Peter heard the gospel, and, boy as he was, he received it into his heart. The seed was sown, and it grew up slowly, but surely. When Peter was about nineteen he was to receive the tonsure: that is to say, he was to have a small round bald patch made on his head, the hair being shaved so as to leave the remaining hair in the form, as the priests said, of the crown of thorns. All priests and monks have their heads thus shaved, and Peter was now to become a priest. But the gospel he had learnt at Paris clung to him. He resolved that the mark of Rome should never be set upon his forehead. He therefore left Paris suddenly and returned to Orbe. He had just arrived there when Father Michael began his sermons.

The priests of Orbe remarked that there was something amiss with Peter, and they suspected that “the new religion” had got hold of him. They had long talks with him, and told him that the Church of Rome held the faith of the old fathers; of Jerome, and of Chrysostom, and of Augustine. “The old ways must be the right ways,” they said; “we get no good by turning aside from the good old paths to new-fangled notions.”

But Peter was not convinced by this time honoured argument. “What is there older,” he said, “than the ways of murder, and lying, and disobedience to God? Is not the way of Cain a very old way? And what is there older than man’s inventions but God Himself? I will believe Him only. The Lord Jesus is my Shepherd, I will not be the disciple of Jerome or Augustine, nor even of Martin Luther — I will follow Christ only.”

And the more the priests argued, the more therefore did Peter betake himself to Christ. He prayed earnestly, not for himself only, but for those round him. He prayed especially for his beloved father and mother. They began to feel a desire to hear the blessed Word of God, which Peter read to them from time to time. And Peter was so respectful, and so gentle, that

they could not be angry with him. You now understand why the sermons of Father Michael were a grief and a sorrow to Peter.

## Chapter 37

### THE LADY ELIZABETH

**B**ut these sermons were destined to come to a sudden and untimely end. Father Michael was one day describing “the new preachers.” He had just told his congregation that the priests and monks were mediators between God and man, and “friends of the saints, who cure all diseases. Those therefore,” he said “who listen to them can want for nothing. But as for the new preachers, who throw down crosses and images, they are the enemies of Christ—they are priests and monks who have broken their vows in order to marry wives, and to live in vice and crime.”

“You lie! you lie!” said a loud voice amongst the crowd.

All turned to the spot whence the voice proceeded, and there, standing up with a face of indignation, was Christopher Holard. In one moment the whole church was in a tumult. There was a general rush made upon Christopher. The foremost in the attack were the women. They were headed by the chief lady of the place, the Lady Elizabeth Arnex.

“All,” says the Chronicle, “fell with one accord upon the said Christopher. They tore out his beard and beat him; they scratched him with their nails



and otherwise, so that if they had been let alone, he would never have gone out of the said church alive, which would have been a great benefit for the poor Catholics.”

The governor of Orbe, however, hearing the tumult, came to the rescue; he rushed amongst the shrieking women, seized Master Christopher, and locked him up in the dungeon of the castle.

There was one woman who was filled with grief at all that had happened: this was Christopher’s old mother. She knew of only one friend to whom she could go for sympathy and help: this was Mark Romain the schoolmaster. She entreated Mark to go with her to the Castle of Echallens, some miles off. The bailiff of Berne lived there. She believed that he might be able and willing to rescue her son from the hands of the papists.

Mark was ready to go at once, and with trembling hearts, the two friends presented themselves at the Castle of Echallens. The bailiff listened kindly to their sad tale.

“It is the friar who is to be blamed, not your son, my good woman,” he said. “Berne will not suffer such preaching as that” The bailiff went immediately to Orbe. He sat down in the open air near the castle, and desired his officers to fetch the friar; but the friar was not to be found. The bailiff waited patiently whilst the officers went from house to house.

The friar meanwhile was safely hid in the house of a certain “Frances Pugin, instructress of girls in all virtue and learning;” but, when he heard the officers were coming, he thought it best to take the bull by the horns. He ran out of the house, and went in a respectful manner to the bailiff, who was still sitting near the castle. The bailiff rose up instantly, seized him by the arm, and said, “I arrest you in the name of my lords of Berne.” He then led

him into the castle, commanded Christopher's dungeon to be unlocked, called Christopher out, and locked up Father Michael in his place.

The good schoolmaster watched these proceedings with joy and triumph. "He was as pleased," it is said, "as if he had gained a thousand crowns." The bailiff said he himself would take Christopher home to his mother.

Meanwhile the news of Father Michael's imprisonment had spread through the town. A mob collected in the marketplace.

"If we can catch Mark Romain," they said, "he shall be thrown into the river, for it was he who fetched the bailiff." Poor Mark came in sight at this moment. He saw his danger, and fled, with the mob in pursuit. They were now gaining fast upon him—he had just reached the front of the church—seeing the door open, he rushed in.

But it was at a fatal moment—five o'clock in the afternoon, when prayers were daily offered up to Mary. Lady Elizabeth, and many of the women of Orbe were kneeling before the altar of "the Queen of Heaven." When Mark Romain suddenly appeared amongst them, they sprang from their knees, flew at him, threw him down, beat him and scratched him.

"I saw the whole affair," says a papist who was present; "I did not think the schoolmaster would ever have got out alive." But at this moment a Lutheran friend came in, and dragged Mark from the midst of his enraged enemies.

The women, Lady Elizabeth at their head, now ran into the streets to implore the bailiff to release the friar. A mob had already gathered round the castle, and in the midst stood the bailiff, Christopher by his side.

Loud and angry voices were heard in every direction. "Why have you locked up Father Michael? Why have you let Christopher out of prison?" they asked.

“By order of my lords of Berne,” said the bailiff; and then, pointing to the thick walls of the castle, he added, “If you can get him out, you may, but I advise you not to try.”

As the bailiff proceeded to the square, turning a deaf ear to threats and entreaties, he met the troop of ladies. They all fell on their knees “with many tears,” and implored “mercy for the good father.” The bailiff was touched by their grief, but he said Father Michael was the prisoner of Berne, and he had no power to release him. He saw Christopher safely home, and returned to Echallens.

The priests of Orbe met together to consult. They resolved to send to Friburg for help. I told you that the town of Orbe was the property of both Friburg and Berne. The lords of Friburg could do nothing without the consent of Berne. They therefore sent messengers to Berne to ask for advice, in consequence of which a number of officers of both cities were sent together to settle the matter at Orbe, when they had inquired into both sides of the question.

As the officers proceeded on their way to Orbe, they passed through the village of Avenches. There, to the joy of the Bernese, they found William Farel, who had been preaching there for the past month. They entreated him to come with them to Orbe. They reached Orbe the day before Palm Sunday.

Quickly the news spread through the little town that the heretic who had preached on the fountain was again amongst them.

But Sunday morning passed quietly, and Sunday afternoon. All the services had been said and sung, excepting only vespers. The people were filling the church for this last service, “when” we are told, “Farel, leaving

his inn with presumptuous boldness, went into the pulpit without asking the leave of anyone, and began to preach.”

At once the whole crowd began to hiss, to howl, to stamp, and to shriek. “You dog! you devil! you heretic!” sounded from every side.

“It was a glorious noise,” said a Catholic who was present. Farel was used to noise. He preached on till they rushed up the pulpit stairs and dragged him down. The governor, afraid of the consequences if he allowed him to be killed, seized him by the arm, and led him back to his inn. Thus ended his first sermon. But the next morning at six o’clock Farel was preaching again in the great square.

The people of Orbe tried another plan this time. Instead of attacking him they left him perfectly alone. Lady Elizabeth then called together at her house “the devout women” of Orbe. She made them a speech, telling them that even women were called to defend holy mother church. They would be rendering a service to all good Catholics by killing Farel. He was to be present, as they all knew, at the town council that afternoon. They would waylay him as he came out, set upon him, and kill him. They knew he could not reach his inn without passing a certain street. They all agreed to meet there in full force. At the time they expected, Farel appeared. Lady Elizabeth rushed forward, and with her friends’ assistance, dragged him to the ground. But a friend of Farel’s, suspecting mischief, had followed him from the council. He arrived at this moment, seized Farel, and dragged him away, after bowing politely to the ladies, to whom he said: “I beg your pardon, ladies, this gentleman is under my charge.” He then took Farel to his inn, and placed him in the safe-keeping of the Bernese officers.

## Chapter 38

### THE WEAKNESS OF GOD THAT IS STRONGER THAN MEN

**M**eanwhile Father Michael was standing before the judges, whom the officers of Berne and Friburg had appointed to hear his defence. And the lord of Arnex, Elizabeth's husband, stood by his side to plead his cause. At the entreaties of this gentleman the friar was set at liberty, having been made-to promise he would henceforth preach nothing but the Word of God.

It seems not to have occurred to those judges that a man-cannot be made to preach the Word of God by orders from his fellow men. The friar thought it best to escape to France. The officers of Berne and Friburg then returned home, leaving Farel at Orbe to do the best he could.

An order soon came from Berne that Master Farel was to have full liberty to preach. The people replied, "Let him go about his business, we want neither him, nor his preaching." The Bernese officers answered, "He is to be free to speak, but no one is forced to go and listen." Farel then gave notice that on the following Saturday he would preach in the church at one

o'clock, and prove to them from Scripture that Father Michael's sermons were wrong.

But Lady Elizabeth, though she no longer dared to kill Farel, was still resolved that he should never preach at Orbe. She made a plan by which she hoped the coming sermon would be as useless as the past ones. When Farel went into the pulpit, he observed that the church was filled with little ragamuffins, and all fast asleep. Some snored loudly, others were plainly endeavouring not to laugh aloud. The moment the sermon began, they all started to their feet, howled, shouted, whistled and shrieked, and then rushed out of the church with a "horrible uproar," leaving Farel alone. "Nobody remained but the minister," says the old Chronicle.

The next day, Sunday, all the priests, monks, and most of the people went in a great procession to another church, outside the town. Farel seized the opportunity, and preached this time, for a while, in peace and quiet. But he had only ten hearers—amongst them Peter Viret, who had welcomed him with overflowing joy. Before the sermon was over the procession returned. The children, who had formed part of it, were longing to have another opportunity of screaming and howling in the church. They rushed in, and speedily put an end to the sermon. Farel came down from the pulpit, and returned to his lodging.

The priests now considered they had gained a complete victory. "He had to run away at last," they said; "he cannot prove a single thing to be wrong in Father Michael's sermons."

The bailiff of Berne heard their boasting. "Very well," he said; "you complain you have not heard the minister. You shall hear him at last. It is the will of my lords of Berne that every father of a family be required to go to his next sermon, under pain of their displeasure." The people of Orbe

knew that Berne must be obeyed. The church was now filled from one end to the other. Farel preached, we are told, a wonderful sermon. He told of the one Saviour, the one Mediator between God and man. "The pope's pardons," he said, "take away money, but they cannot take away sin; but the pardon which God gives is bought with the blood of Jesus—a full and free pardon for the chief of sinners."

For two days the people of Orbe were obedient to the orders of Berne. On the third day few came except the two or three whose names I have told you.

But in the villages around there were multitudes who longed to hear the glad tidings. The door of Farel's lodging was beset by cow-herds, and vine-dressers, by shepherds, and weavers, entreating him to come to their mountains and valleys to bring them the news of peace and life. Farel wept with grief that there were not preachers enough to go into all these villages. "No one can describe," he said, "the longing of these people for the gospel—the harvest so great, the labourers so few."

A little later he wrote, "It would need a long letter to give you any idea of the extent of the harvest, and of the eagerness with which the people crowd to hear the gospel. Unhappily we need labourers, for those who have come to us from France are not equal to their task, and those pious Frenchmen, whom, we would gladly welcome, are ensnared by the charms of home, and prefer the silence of slavery to the open confession of the name of Christ. Our brother Toussaint himself has resisted all our entreaties till he was forced to fly for safety to Zurich. Exhort him to make up by his zeal for his long inactivity."

Some of those lately converted at Orbe, offered to go; but Farel did not think them sufficiently taught in the Scriptures. He would not consent to

their teaching before they had learnt. Some of the rest were offended at this, and Farel was told they thought him too strict. "Never mind," he said, "it is better to offend them than to offend God."

But there was one amongst the believers at Orbe, who had not offered to go, and he was just the one whom Farel thought fit for it. This was young Peter Viret. He had diligently studied the Scriptures, and his heart was given to Christ; but he was modest and humble, and he therefore shrank from coming forward. "God calls you, Peter," said Farel; "it is not your power, but God's power that we have to depend upon. His strength is made perfect in weakness." Peter looked to God for guidance and help. Through his words, or rather through God's Word, read and explained by him, his father and mother had already been brought to Christ. Young and ignorant as he felt himself to be, God might use him to bring others also.

On the 6th of May, five weeks after Farel's arrival at Orbe, Peter preached his first sermon in the great church. Though he was not a clergyman, and was suspected of heresy, the whole town went to hear him. The townspeople had known him from a boy, and they felt it rather an honour to their little town that the son of Master Viret the tailor, only nineteen years old, should have learning enough to preach sermons in a church. God used that first sermon of Peter Viret's to save some souls.



## Chapter 39

### THE LOST SHEEP FOUND

**A**nd had Farel's sermons been useless? It had seemed in his case as though the seed had fallen upon the wayside, and the fowls of the air had devoured it.

But God had a purpose of love and grace in sending His beloved servant amongst the enemies and blasphemers at Orbe. There were those even amongst them, upon whom He had set his love—whom He loved even when they were dead in trespasses and sin—loved them with great love, which many waters could not quench, neither could the floods of their wickedness and rebellion drown it.

It was at the beginning of that month of May that there was joy in the presence of the angels of God over the Lady Elizabeth Arnex, and Hugonin her husband. I cannot tell you how the Lady Elizabeth was brought to Christ. Her husband was, as we know, compelled to hear the preaching by the order from Berne. Perhaps he took his wife with him. The news came like a thunderbolt upon the people of Orbe. It was not long before they said

that the Lady Elizabeth was the worst Lutheran in the place. Yes, “on the great festival of our Lady, she stayed at home, and had her washing day.”

However it may have happened, we know that it was the work of Him who loved her and gave Himself for her. He had been seeking out His lost sheep throughout Switzerland and France, throughout England and Germany, and “all the places where they had been driven in the cloudy and dark day.” Of Elizabeth and her husband— of you, if you too are saved—the Lord has said, Compel them to come in, that My house may be filled.” It is not of the will of the flesh, it is not of the will of man, that any sinner comes to the Saviour. And if you are not yet saved, not yet turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, the same love and power that sought and found Elizabeth Arnex is needed to seek and to find you.

Many lost sheep have been brought home in the Shepherd’s arms since He carried safely into Paradise Elizabeth and Hugonin. But all have been found against their will, and all have been carried home by a power not their own, because He whom they hated, loved them with everlasting love, and had need of them to make His joy complete.

“Yes, it is the first great truth of the gospel that, instead of putting me away because of my sins, He comes in love and puts my sins away, and how? Christ bore my sins, every one of them. They never can be mentioned again anymore; and having borne them, His blood makes me whiter than snow, and His blood is shed; so that if you are coming to God by Him, and your sins are not put away, all of them, once for all, they never can be, because Christ cannot die over again. By one offering, He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Christ has borne sin, and it is all completely cleared away, for all who believe in Him.”

Yes, we come to a Saviour who has borne the whole punishment, and through Him we come to the Father, who has now no sin with which to charge us, who sees only when He looks at us how perfect was the work His Son has done.

And, therefore, Elizabeth Arnex could now hear from His lips the blessed words, “Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.” And it is when we know this unspeakable love and grace, that we abhor ourselves and repent in dust and ashes. We then see that we had no part in the work that saves us, except that we shared in the hatred and the enmity which nailed to the cross the Blessed Son of God. It was when man had done his worst that God opened wide the door of Heaven to him who had done it. “Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom? And this God has explained to us in the tenth chapter of the Hebrews—we have” boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,” for these “holy places made with hands” were “the figures of the true,” even “Heaven itself,” where Christ now appears in the presence of God for us.

And scarcely had the news spread through the town that these two lions had been changed into lambs, when a fresh thunderbolt fell upon the people of Orbe. Only four days after Peter Viret’s first sermon, George Grivat, the precentor of the church choir, appeared in the pulpit, not to sing Latin anthems, as he had done till that time, but to preach the glad tidings he had heard from William Farel. The best singer in the choir was now a heretic preacher! His father, his brothers, and his friends, were filled with anger and despair.

## *Chapter 40*

### THE BREAKING OF BREAD

**I**t was just about this time that Farel, who had gone to preach at St. Blaise, near the lake of Neuchâtel, was attacked by a furious mob, and beaten till he was half dead. He arrived at Morat so ill and exhausted that he had to stay in bed for some days. He shivered from head to foot, and began to spit blood. Preaching was out of the question for the present. But God had provided for him just the work that he was able to do. As he lay on his bed, a young man of pleasant countenance came into the room, and sat down beside him.

“My name,” said the young man, “is Christopher Fabri. I come from Dauphiné. I have been studying medicine at Montpellier, in France. I was to finish my studies at Paris. On my way there I arrived at Lyons. The Lord had shown me something of His blessed gospel before I left Montpellier, and to my great joy I found some of His people at Lyons, who taught me more than I knew before. They told me, too, about the great work the Lord has been doing at Neuchâtel and so many other places. When I heard this, I said to myself, ‘I will not go to Paris, but I will go to Switzerland. It matters

not that I have to forsake my family, and my country, and my studies; I must go and fight for Christ, by the side of William Farel!’ And now, Master William, here I am, do with me what seems good to you.”

Farel felt his heart drawn to this young man, “as to a son whom God had sent him.” And it was this moment, when he was laid aside and suffering, that God had chosen to give him this pleasure. He and Christopher read and prayed and talked together, during the days that followed—happy, quiet days, such as Farel had seldom known. He would have liked to keep his beloved Christopher always with him. But dear as Christopher had become, Christ was dearer.

“You must go, my son,” said Farel, “and preach at Neuchâtel—I cannot go there now.” Christopher answered with tears, “Oh! Master William, my sorrow is greater at leaving you than when I left father and mother.”

But Christ was first in the heart of Christopher also, and he went to Neuchâtel.

Meanwhile, a message came to Farel from his friends at Orbe. They wished to meet together to break bread in remembrance of Christ. Farel was now able to move. He went at once to Orbe. On Whit-Sunday, the 28th of May, at six in the morning, he appeared in the pulpit in the great church. Only those were there who desired to hear the preaching, but they were a large number.

He preached to them how the body of Christ was broken on the cross, and how full and free” is the pardon of sin, which that precious death has gained for all who believe in Him.

When the sermon was over, eight believers met together to break bread with William Farel. They were Hugonin and Elizabeth, Christopher Holard and his old mother, William Viret, the tailor, George Grivat, and two others.

Peter Viret was away at that time. There, in the great church where, not two months before, both Christopher and Mark Romain had been attacked so fiercely by Lady Elizabeth, they were now gathered as members of the One Body of Christ—one with Him—one also with one another.

“Do you forgive one another?” said Farel. Heartily they answered, “Yes.”

Then two of them spread a white cloth upon a bench, and there they placed a loaf of bread, and a cup of wine. They would not place them on the altar, because “it was polluted by idolatry.”

Then Farel prayed. And then together they broke the bread and drank the wine, as it had been done in the upper room at Troas long ago.

It was at last that worship in spirit and in truth, for which Farel’s heart had longed — Christ, and Christ alone, was owned at last.

But scarcely had they finished, when a crowd of angry priests rushed into the church. They were filled with horror at the crime which had been committed. And how many are there not now in “Protestant England,” who would feel much as these enraged priests? “Is that the Lord’s supper? No clergymen! no consecration of bread or wine! no vestments! no service books!” Alas! are there not amongst us many honoured forms and rules which are just as much absent from the pages of the New Testament as saint-worship and purgatory, popedom and holy water?

It is well to know what is to be found in the Bible: it is well also to know what is not to be found. And if forms and rules, which have no place in the Word of God, have a place in our hearts, it is because we keep a place there in which Christ does not reign alone. If we condemn the infidel who diminishes from the holy Word of God, let us remember that to add to it is no less a sin in the eyes of Him, whose perfect Word it is.

If this breaking of bread is startling to you, is it because it is contrary to the Bible? or because it is contrary to the rules which man has made? Look through the Scriptures, and see what you can find as to the supper of the Lord, which should have been added to that simple meeting in the church at Orbe.

The priests, with the fear of Berne before their eyes, cared only to express their anger by singing mass more loudly than was their wont. And the next day, Whit-Monday, “these heretics” did not come to church at all. William Viret made coats, and Christopher Holard kept his shop open—all were at work. “Ha!” said the priests, “they keep no holiday. except the Sunday!”

## Chapter 41

### THE SIEGE OF GRANSON

**D**o you remember Tavannes, where the idols had been broken? Since that time there had been a preacher of the gospel living there, called De Glautinis. This good man now came for a while to help Farel in a new expedition.

There was a town on the lake of Neuchâtel, where the gospel had not yet been preached. This town was Granson. Close to the town stood a large and ancient convent of grey friars. It was to this convent that Farel and his friend directed their steps. They were shown into the parlour, where the superior, Guy Regis, asked them what they wanted. "We are come," said Farel, "to ask leave to preach in the church of the convent." In a moment it dawned upon the superior that this was Farel. "Heretic!" he exclaimed. "Son of a Jew!" shouted another monk. And the two friends were quickly turned out of the convent gates.

The news spread like wildfire through the town that Farel was come. When he went to the second convent of Benedictines, the monks were prepared to receive him. Farel said as before, that he desired leave to preach



in the church. Immediately the whole convent was in an uproar. The monks ran into the cloisters, where the two friends were waiting. One had armed himself with a pistol, another with a knife. The monk with the pistol flew upon Farel, and pointing the pistol at his head with one hand, he endeavoured with the other to drag him along to the convent prison. De Glautinis rushed forward to rescue his friend, but was immediately attacked vigorously by the monk with the knife.

By this time the shouts of the angry monks had risen to such a pitch, that some friends of Farel, who were waiting outside the gate, forced their way in to see what was happening. They dragged the two preachers away, and the monks having shut and barred their gates, remained, as if besieged, for a whole fortnight. They feared another visit from Farel.

The preachers now agreed to separate for a time. De Glautinis remained at Granson, and Farel went to preach in the country round. De Glautinis had for a while a fine opportunity. As the monks were so closely shut up within their locked gates, De Glautinis preached in the streets to large crowds. The monks, headed by Guy Regis, took courage one day to rush out in a body and surround the preacher. But they dared do no more than call him names in loud and threatening voices, and assure him he should never preach in the churches. They then disappeared again behind their convent walls.

Meanwhile some Bernese lords, who were at Neuchâtel, heard how the preachers had been received at Granson. They speedily made their appearance, sent for Farel, and ordered the convent churches to be immediately thrown open for the preaching. This was according to the wish of many of the people of Granson. Crowds filled the churches to listen to the gospel.

The catholics now formed themselves into a strong party. The peaceful little town was divided. The catholics stuck fir-cones in their caps, to distinguish themselves from the gossellers, and paraded the streets to defy the lords of Berne. The magistrates took part with the catholics, and after the preaching had continued for some days, they seized the preachers, at the request of the monks, and put them in prison. They were, however, soon released, and the monks then sought help from the neighbouring towns. A friar was sent from Lausanne to preach on St. John's day, (June 24). Farel and his friend went to hear the sermon. After a while Farel stood up (as was the custom in those days) and spoke in answer to the monk. The bailiff of Granson, displeased at this interruption, struck Farel a blow. This was the signal for a general battle. The magistrates, the monks, and many of the people fell upon the preachers, beat and kicked them, and "grievously maltreated them," as we are told.

A gosseller started off at once to tell a Bernese officer, who was then at a place called Colombier, nine miles off. The officer quickly arrived, and having called together the magistrates, he ordered that Farel and the friar should preach by turns, and that the people should quietly listen to both sides. The preaching was to begin next day.

Meanwhile a report had spread through the little town, that Farel meant to go secretly into the church, and pull down the great crucifix.

This was a story got up by some of the monks to excite the catholics. Two monks, named Tissot and Gondoze, who really believed it, thought it would be a work pleasing to God that they should murder Farel. They armed themselves with axes, which they hid under their frocks, and posted themselves in front of the great crucifix. They waited in vain for a long

while. The time was almost come when the preaching was to begin. Farel had not appeared.

At last two men entered the church. The monks advanced. The men were strangers, but the monks thought by the look of them that they were heretics. "Stand back," said one of the monks, and the other darting forward, rudely pushed the foremost man. This was the Bernese officer De Watteville, who had come, attended by his servant, to hear the preaching. "Gently," he said to the monk, "you should not lose your temper." But the servant, less meek than his master, flew at the monk, and caught him round the body.

He felt the axe under the monk's frock. He seized it instantly, and was prepared to strike the monk a violent blow. His master, however, checked him. The monks fled in terror.

De Watteville now resolved in his turn, to guard the church for the gospellers. He posted his servant within the door, and told him to keep watch, whilst he pursued the monks.

The servant paced up and down, with the axe on his shoulder, and his eye fixed on the door.

After a few minutes, about thirty women suddenly entered the church, and made their way towards the gallery. Each of them held up her serge apron, and looked fiercely around. Their plan was to hide in the gallery close to the pulpit. Some had filled their aprons with mould from their gardens, others with cinders from their stoves. They had determined that as soon as Farel began to preach, they would fling the ashes into his eyes, and the mould into his mouth.

The servant surveyed this party, and then, having made up his mind that they were intent on mischief, he ran upon them, brandishing his axe. The

women, who had expected to be welcomed by the friendly monks, shrieked, let go their aprons, and fled to their homes, leaving the church strewn with mould and ashes.

The lord De Watteville had meanwhile caught the two monks, Tissot and Gondoiz, and they were forthwith locked in a dungeon, there to spend the next fortnight.

The preaching now began without further disturbance, and Farel and the friar were heard in turns. But it grieved Farel that the two monks could not be there. He therefore went to their dungeon, there to speak to them of the love and grace of Christ. Great was the wonder of these two poor men, when they found the heresy they had so greatly feared was the blessed story of the cross of Christ. They heard from Farel's lips of the love of Jesus, and they found rest to their souls. They came out of their dungeons at the end of the fortnight, to go forth and tell what great things the Lord had done for them. They became afterwards faithful preachers of the faith they had once blasphemed.

## *Chapter 42*

### “THE WARS OF THE LORD”

**T**hus in towns and villages throughout the country do we read of sinners being saved, and of numbers of men and women who were turned from their idols to the living and true God. Farel had this joy in the midst of his many sufferings—much to cheer and encourage him. But he had also to grieve over much that was of the flesh, and not of the Spirit—even in those who ranged themselves on the side of the gospel. It is true that when we read in Romish accounts of the outrages and violence committed by the gossellers, we must bear in mind that these accounts are given by those who believed falsehood was right, if it was to serve the cause of the church. We know too that the opposition to the gospel proceeded really from him who is the father of lies, and as he stirred up his servants to murder and ill-treat the preachers, so did he also stir them up to slander and malign them. Satan is, and was “the accuser of the brethren.” Farel tells us too, that in several places the images were secretly broken by the priests themselves. The priests did this for a double purpose. Firstly, they accused the gossellers of having done it, and thus stirred up a persecution against

them. Secondly, they found it a good speculation' to make reliquaries of the broken fragments, which they sold at high prices to the ignorant people.

“Also,” adds Farel, “some are found who break down images, and other abominations, merely out of pride and ill-will.”

We must, therefore, not only remember that God was working by imperfect instruments, but also, that there were those who threw themselves into the gospel movement from motives that were of the flesh, and not of God. There were those who simply disliked the tyranny of the priests—those who liked change and excitement—those who were anxiously urged on by friends and relations to take up a cause in which their consciences had never been exercised. We can, therefore, readily believe that unseemly acts of violence, and of insolence, were not unheard of in the opposition made by the gossellers to the priests and their followers. It was an age when coarse words and rude actions were allowed, and were even customary. Farel himself no doubt used language which to our ears would be startling, and he may also have proceeded to violent measures, in which neither the wisdom of the serpent nor the harmlessness of the dove had any part.

We, in these days, go to the other extreme, and find the sword of the Spirit too sharp a weapon; and the fable of the sheep-dogs, who allowed themselves to be beguiled into friendly terms with the wolves, is too often acted out by the pastors and teachers of the church of God, much to the injury of the sheep.

But I would remind you that, even in a great work of God, like that in West Switzerland in those old times, man's folly, man's pride, man's selfishness, and man's violence and impatience, were weeds which were often cropping up, even amongst the true people of God. And I would remind you, on the other hand, lest you should be stumbled by such weeds

amongst God's people now, that they-are not to be taken as a proof of a bad cause, but that the cause must be tried by its own merits, being judged by the Word of God. And where the cause is right, may we be found, even if some that are unworthy of it should be found there too, and actions unworthy of it should be met with in many, alas! perhaps in all.

I could not tell, nor could you remember if I did, all the towns and villages of Western Switzerland where the gospel was heard from the lips of Farel, and believed by numbers whose hearts the Lord had touched. All around were multitudes who entreated to have more preachers sent to them. On all sides they were now meeting in twos and threes to break bread. They had no rules but the New Testament, and all was done in that simple way in which God delights, and which the world despises.

Twice during this year we read of Farel being imprisoned, and constantly of his being attacked, ill-treated, and insulted. The Bishop of Lausanne stirred up these riots on the one hand, Berne put them down on the other.

"I am glad," wrote the bishop to the people of Avenches, on the occasion of one of these tumults, "that you have proved yourselves virtuous, good, and true Christians and catholics, for which I praise God and our lady, and commend you heartily; and I pray and exhort you, in fatherly affection, to go forward and persevere: for thus doing you will gain the favour of God, profit to soul and body, and in the end the glory of Paradise."

Soon after, our old friend Wildermuth writes to Berne: "Know that Master William Farel has been so grievously insulted and ill-used this very day, Sunday, at Payerne, that I pitied him sincerely. Would to God I had had twenty Bernese with me! Then, with God's help, we should not have let things happen as they did. They locked the two churches against Farel, so that he had to preach in the open air, in the churchyard Thereupon came the

banneret, and the town clerk; and the banneret took him off to prison, which was the best thing he could do, as the people wanted to drown him.”

Again Farel writes, in October, that the people of Granson had determined to appeal to Berne, to allow them to have both gospel and mass at the same time. “We answered,” says Farel, “that the gospel and the mass are like fire and water, and that the lords of Berne did not want preachers who sang mass, but who preached the holy gospel, purely and faithfully.” “After this,” he writes further, “they never ceased to make disturbances during the sermon, both inside and outside the church; they rang bells, they screamed, they growled, they beat upon the doors, they mocked and insulted the preachers and hearers. They thrust great crosses in their faces, they made faces at them, they blasphemed and threatened, they beat and abused the preachers. And thus proof was given that those who love the Word are patient, for none of those who cared for the gospel were moved by these injuries and outrages.” It was about this time that a gospeller who had arrived at Granson, wrote, on the following day, to Berne—” The preachers have their faces scratched and torn, as if they had been having a war with the cats, and the alarm, bell is rung to rouse the people to attack them, just as when wolves come into the neighbourhood.”

A few weeks later, the preacher at a neighbouring village, wrote also to Berne, as follows: “The priest of Concise, near Granson, was reading in a Bible in the house of a man called Pillione. One of the daughters of the said Pillione said to him: ‘Tell us something out of that book.’ And he answered, \* It is not for you to know the affairs of God.’ And she said, “It is for me as much as for you, for I am just as much a Christian and a child of the Lord as you are.’ And the priest got up, and went to strike her, saying, with an oath, ‘If you were my sister I should hit you such a blow that you would kiss the



ground.’ But the girl took a chair and held it before her, so that he did not hit her, for she was shielded by the chair.” Such were the scenes amidst which the Lord’s servants preached and laboured from day to day.

## Chapter 43

### THE ANCIENT WITNESSES

**I**n the month of July of the next year, 1532, Farel returned afresh to the work at Granson. Several who had believed the gospel there, now wished to go forth as preachers, and Farel and some of the older preachers were anxious to know whether they were sufficiently well taught in the Scriptures. They spent some days, therefore, together, in reading the Word, and in prayer.

On one of these days, Farel was told that two strangers wished to speak to him. They were brought in—foreign-looking, sunburnt men, but speaking French easily. Their wonderful history was soon told.

Long, long ago, they said, when the Roman Emperor, Constantine, had done his best to mix up the church of God with the heathen world, their fathers had set themselves apart, desiring not to be amongst those who were serving two masters. They had fled away to live in lonely mountain valleys in the high Alps of Piedmont. “And there,” said the two strangers, “have we, their children, lived ever since. We have never owned the pope, but we have had the Bible only for our teacher, and we have, therefore, worshipped

no saints, nor images, nor wafers; and have been called heretics and infidels.”

These people were the Waldenses, of whom I told you at the beginning of this story.

You may remember how, just at the time of William Farel’s birth, the pope had sent an army against them, and had left dead upon the mountains 4000 of these witnesses for God, amongst them 400 little children, who were hunted and murdered amongst the snowy peaks, whilst little William was sleeping peacefully in his cradle at les Farelles. About ninety years before that, numbers had perished, being attacked by bands of soldiers from Savoy, just at Christmas time—and then, also, no less than eighty little children were found in one place, frozen in the snow in the arms of their dead mothers.

At last the news had come somehow over the mountains that in Germany, and France, and Switzerland, there were preachers raised up, who believed in the Bible only, and preached the same old gospel for which the Waldenses had suffered and died. Then one of the mountain pastors determined to go and see if this were true. His name was Martin Gonin. He set off, and travelled about till he found some of these preachers, and came back to tell the glad tidings, “and to scatter about in the mountain villages the good books which he had brought back with him. After reading these books, and hearing Martin’s stories, two other Waldensian pastors, or “barbes,” as they were called, were sent by their brethren to learn more of the gossellers in Switzerland, and to claim fellowship with them as having the like precious faith with themselves.

These two barbes were called George Morel and Peter Masson. They went first to Basle, and asked for the house of our old friend, Hausschein. The

good man was delighted and surprised when these simple men from the mountain valleys told him their story, and when they showed him the papers they carried in their bosoms, on which they had written an account of their faith. Would you like to know what they had written? I will tell you a part of it.

“Christ,” they said, “is our Life, our Truth, our Peace, our Righteousness, our Shepherd, our Advocate, our Victim, our High Priest, who died for the salvation of believers.” They had written, too, their belief that the religion of the pope was “a mixture of Jewish, Pagan, and Christian rites.” Hausschein looked at these men with wonder and joy. “I thank God,” he said, “that He has called you to so great light.”

Hausschein’s friends at Basle gathered at his house to see the men from the mountains, who had never lost the Bible, and never forgotten the gospel. But when they questioned the barbes further, they were not altogether satisfied with their answers. The barbes confessed that from fear, and a desire for peace, they allowed the Romish priests to baptize their children, and that they sometimes went with the papists to mass. This conduct, which would be generally approved as wide-minded and charitable, was by no means right in the eyes of the faithful Hausschein. He said, “Has not Christ fully satisfied the justice of God? Is there any need to offer other sacrifices after that of Calvary? By saying amen to the priests’ mass, you deny the grace of Jesus Christ.” The good man further discovered that the barbes thought every man had some natural goodness in him, which made him do good works. Hausschein told them that no good work ever came from any other power than that of the Holy Ghost. The barbes, who were humble modest men, were not offended at being contradicted by those whom they

had expected to find far behind themselves in knowledge. They owned their ignorance, and were thankful to be taught

Hausschein did not do as some would have done — turn his back upon them because of their errors. “We must enlighten these dear brothers,” he said to his friends; “but above all things we must love them.”

The barbes at last left Basle to return to their mountains. But I am sorry to tell you that on the way, their holy conversation drew upon them the notice of some of the papists at Dijon in France. They were both seized and put in the prison of Dijon. George Morel managed to escape, but Peter Masson was condemned and put to death.

There was great sorrow in the mountain villages when George Morel came back alone. But everyone was anxious to hear all he had to tell. He related faithfully how Master Hausschein had reproved them for having fellowship with Rome. From this time there was a division amongst the pastors. Some said Hausschein was right. Others defended the plan of being on brotherly terms with the Romish priests. At last all the barbes from all the villages met together to consult about this matter. As they could not settle it, they determined to send into Switzerland two of their number— one called George, and the other Martin Gonin, the same who made the first journey in search of the gospel preachers. These two barbes were directed to find the great preacher Master Farel and, if possible, to bring him back to tell them what they ought to do.

This was the long story which Farel heard from the two mountain pastors. “And now,” they said, “will you come back with us? and all the barbes shall meet to hear what you have to say.” Farel was delighted. His friend Saunier agreed to go with him. But most of Farel’s friends were filled with terror when they heard of this distant journey. There was a fresh persecution of

the Waldenses just set on foot by the parliament of Aix-les-Bains. The prisons of Savoy and Piedmont were filled with them. The Duke of Savoy was a bitter enemy to the gospel Farel would have to pass through his country. The protection of Berne would be no use to him there. But none of these things moved William Farel. He saw that the matter was far too important to the honour of Christ to be neglected at any risk. He immediately prepared for the long journey, and by the middle of August he was ready to start.

The barbes seem to have gone before, to make known amongst their brethren that William Farel was on his way. And immediately some set off to meet the Swiss pastors, and to bring them by secret paths to the mountain valleys. It seems probable that a third preacher was also of the party, of whom you will hear more bye and bye. He, too, was a Frenchman, called Robert Olivetan. He had been a student at Paris, and had a cousin, of whom much will have to be told later on—John Calvin, of Noyon, in Picardy. This cousin had by this time learnt something of the gospel from Robert, but he will not appear in our story for some years to come.

## Chapter 44

### THE MOUNTAIN MEETING

It was a joyful day to the people of the Waldensian valleys, when at last the pastors from Switzerland came in sight. They had had a long and dangerous journey through the enemy's country. They had travelled along the loneliest of the mountain paths, avoiding towns and villages, and hiding themselves amongst the rocks, and in the woods. The point they had to reach was the valley of Angrogna, in Piedmont, the home of Martin Gonin.

This glorious valley is one of the most beautiful and fertile of all those amongst the Italian Alps. At the bottom rushes a wild mountain torrent, sometimes foaming amongst the piled-up rocks, and sometimes hidden beneath the thick shade of walnut trees, willows, and weeping ashes. Green meadows and cornfields lie on either side of the river. Higher up are vineyards, and magnificent woods of walnut and chestnut. Higher up still are forests of beech and oak, and above these, wild rocks, intermingled with copses of birch and hazel. Here and there, scattered over the meadows, and amongst the woods, were the little hamlets and the wooden cottages of the Waldenses. In the mountains around was many a cavern, and deep rocky

cleft, where in former days the persecuted Waldenses had met for worship, or had hidden from the armies of the pope.

As the preachers drew near this lovely valley they were met by some of the peasants, who had been watching the mountain paths to catch the first sight of their Swiss brethren. Soon all the villagers had gathered to see them arrive, for the tidings that they were near at hand had been brought by a man of the village, John Peyret, who had gone to meet them, and had returned quickly to tell the glad tidings to his friends and neighbours.

“That one on the white horse,” he said, “is William Farel. That one on the dark horse is Anthony Saunier.”

The preachers received a warm welcome. Many other travellers arrived at the same time, for it had been told far and wide that there was to be a great meeting in the valley of Angrogna, and that the preachers from Switzerland would be there. Every little house was filled, and the quiet valley had become for a time a meeting place for hundreds of strangers.

There were Waldenses from distant settlements in the south of Italy, in France, in Bohemia, and from many parts of Savoy and Piedmont. These distant settlements had been formed by Waldenses who had fled in former times from the fire and sword of the papists.

There were nobles from their castles in Italy, there were the barbes from all the villages, and others who were only peasants, cowherds, labourers, and vine-dressers.

No room in the villages would have been large enough for this great meeting. It was therefore to be held in the open air. Martin Gonin had prepared a number of rough benches beneath the chestnut trees, where all might sit. The meeting divided itself into two parties—those who wished to be on terms of fellowship with Rome, and those who desired to stand aloof



from every trace of popish observances. The speakers for the first party were two barbes called Daniel of Valence, and John of Molines. The speakers for the second, Farel and Saunier. Most of the men of the higher classes were on the side of Daniel and John.

It was on the 12th of September that this meeting on the mountains was opened “in the name of God.”

Farel rose up, and at once proceeded to the point “Christians,” he said, “have no ceremonial law. No act of worship has any merit before God. The multitude of feasts, consecrations, ceremonies, chants, and machine-made prayers are a great evil. What then is worship? The Lord has answered this question—’God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him, must warship Him in spirit and in truth.’”

Daniel and John were ill-pleased at Farel’s address. They would not throw over all feasts, ceremonies, and chants, but take some and reject others. But the other barbes said that their fathers had spoken as Farel did, and they had the old confessions of their faith in writing, saying that “all feasts, vigils of saints, holy water, abstaining from flesh, and other like things invented by men, were to be rejected.” The meeting, with few exceptions, declared that Farel was right.

But Farel was not satisfied with this admission. He knew that faith in forms and love of ceremonies are but the branches which grow from a root that is deep in the heart of every natural man. It would be of little use to lop off the branches, and leave the root untouched. What is this root? It is in your heart, and in mine. The root is the belief that we all naturally have, that we ourselves, must needs have a share in the work of salvation, and that the power by which we worship God is in ourselves, not in the Holy Ghost. If there are any who are brought to the simple confession, “Salvation is of the

Lord,” it is by the power of the Holy Ghost alone. Thus the papist, who thinks that baptism and absolution will save him, and the Protestant, who thinks that his prayers and repentance are for the same purpose, and the ranter, who trusts in his feelings and in natural excitement, are all alike putting forth branches from the same root, the pride of the heart of man.

In the same way does this pride of our hearts lead us to imagine that we can render prayer and worship more acceptable to God by our addition to it of sights, sounds, and even smells, which are pleasing to our natural senses, and which are contrived by our own imaginations. “The Holy Ghost is not enough,” is the motto which really befits all these attempts of man’s heart, to manufacture something which is: called the worship of God.

“It is by means of this teaching of the natural power of man,” said William Farel, “that popery took salvation out of the hands of God, and put it into the hands of the priests. God has chosen, before the foundation of the world, all those who have been, or will be saved. It is therefore impossible for them not to be saved. Whosoever upholds free-will, absolutely denies the grace of God.”

Daniel and John resisted this with all their might They did not like to be put in the place of the man who fell among thieves, who could do nothing, and pay nothing: nor do we till we have learnt the blessed heart of Christ, how to satisfy the love of His Father, and His own love also. He sought and found us, dead as we were in trespasses and sins, and laid us on His shoulders rejoicing, and gave to us eternal life, which we can never lose, because it is the eternal life that is in Him. “As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will? But it is only the dead who can be quickened. How many good works, I would ask you, had David done, when God called him the man after His own

heart? How much had he prayed, or repented, or sought after God? Look in your Bible, and you will see that he was born eight years after this word of God was spoken: and when the time came God sought him.

Some of the barbes now brought forward their old confessions of faith, in which it was written that to deny the truths of which Farel had been speaking was the work of antichrist. “More than that,” said Farel, “That which I have said is written in the Scripture? He read the passages that proved it. The barbes said they must consider this matter. And at last, with the exception of Daniel and John, they owned that Farel was right in this matter also. Other points had then to be settled—as for example the observance of the Lord’s Day, confession of sins to God, not to a priest, &c.

But again Daniel and John came forward. “Is it not right,” they said, “to conform outwardly to some things which we do not entirely go along with, in order to avoid persecution?”

“Certainly it is wrong,” replied Farel, “all dissimulation is wrong.”

But the two barbes were not to be silenced. They said if they were to break off from all these outward observances, they would be condemning their former pastors, who had allowed them. And if they provoked the Roman Catholics, the preaching of the gospel would be stopped altogether. And if a thing is done with a good intention, it is not to be condemned as wrong.

Then Farel spoke with his voice of thunder. He said all outward forms are but lies if we do not observe them in sincerity and truth. Thus we are guilty of falsehood, if we outwardly conform to those things which we in our hearts believe to be wrong. He spoke long and earnestly, and the solemn words reached the hearts of the Waldenses. On all sides they wept abundantly saying, “We have sinned against the Lord.” They then wrote a

confession, and signed it, and declared that henceforth they would stand utterly aloof from all the ceremonies of Rome.

But Daniel and John would not sign this paper. In grief and displeasure they turned from their brethren, and went to the distant settlements of the Waldenses in Bohemia. They there told their sad tale, how they had lived in happy harmony in their peaceful valleys, till some unknown preachers and teachers had crept in amongst them, and made disputes and divisions, and drawn upon them fresh persecutions. The Bohemian Waldenses fully believed and trusted Daniel and John, and wrote a letter to their brethren on the Alps, warning them against false prophets, and lamenting over them, that they had been so easily led astray. Daniel and John brought back this letter in triumph. But the Alpine Waldenses wrote a more truthful account of all that had happened, and sent it to Bohemia, when the fresh persecutions which followed Farel's visit gave them time to do so.

We must now return to Farel. Whilst he remained at Angrogna he had many talks with the barbes and the villagers. They shewed him their old books--not printed books, for they had been written long before printing was known: some, they said, were already more than 400 years old. They were kept as precious treasures, and handed down from father to son. They were few in number, but they were all the books they had. Those they valued most were some ancient Bibles carefully copied out in old French. Whilst in all those countries called Christian, the Bible had been a book unknown to the people, these poor peasants in their mountain cottages had read the old Bibles from generation to generation.

“But,” said Farel, “if these are all the Bibles you have there must be many amongst you who can see them but seldom. You ought all of you to have Bibles. If there are so many sects and heresies, it all comes from ignorance

of the Word of God. There must be French Bibles printed, and you must have as many as you want.”

The Waldenses were delighted at the hope of each one having a French Bible. But this was not so easy. It is true there were some French New Testaments. Master Faber had, as you know, translated the whole New Testament some years before. But these were not plentiful. Besides, Farel thought it was a translation that might be improved. There was, therefore, a great work to be done—to get the whole Bible translated into good French, and to get it printed and sent over the mountains into the Waldensian villages. Farel would look to God for the men who could do this work.

“Besides having Bibles,” he said further to the barbes, “you ought to have schools. I must send you not only Bibles but schoolmasters.” The Waldenses were thankful for this also, and they asked Farel to take a written account of all that had been decided at the great mountain-meeting, and get the whole printed, so that each might have a copy. Then with much love and affection, Farel took his leave of them. They watched the white horse and the black horse till they disappeared in the wooded valleys below, and went to their homes thanking the Lord that He had sent Farel amongst them.

## *Chapter 45*

### THE DARK DAYS OF GENEVA

**A**nd now for the homeward journey! Farel did not intend to return by the way that he came. Leaving the shelter ‘of the thick woods and the lonely mountain paths, he rode onwards to the place which had so long been laid upon his heart—the old city of Geneva. Yes, Geneva, like Neuchâtel, like Orbe and Granson, must “be taken for Christ”

Farel had had his eye upon Geneva for years back. The time was come for the first onset.

But before I tell you of Farel’s arrival at Geneva, it will be needful to make you understand something of the past history of the town, and of the state of things at that time, otherwise, many things which happened during Farel’s visit there would be very perplexing to you.

Geneva is now, as you know, one of the chief cities of Switzerland; but in the days of Farel it was not a Swiss town at all, nor ever had been; it was the capital of the little state of Geneva, which had in ancient times belonged to the German emperors of Rome. But about 400 years before the time; of Farel, it had become an independent state, and had two rulers, the Count of

Geneva, and the Prince-Bishop. These two were naturally jealous of each other, and there were constant disputes between them.

The powerful princes of Savoy, who lived near, took advantage of these disputes to gain power themselves in the city of Geneva. This city was to them what the vineyard of Naboth was to Ahab. One prince of Savoy after another made vain attempts to get possession of it. They succeeded at last in getting rid of one obstacle in their way, namely, the Count of Geneva. They took the bishop's part against the count, and the count was ousted. But to get rid of the bishop was not so easy.

At last the time came when by strange means they gained their end. In the year 1434, Amadeus VIII., Duke of Savoy, gave up the government of Savoy to his eldest son, and became a hermit. Soon after, the council of Basle made Amadeus pope, by the name of Felix V. There was another pope set the same time. Pope Felix now seized his opportunity. On the pretext that popes might appoint bishops, he made himself Bishop-Prince of Geneva. He was soon after deprived of his popedom, but he continued to be bishop of Geneva; and when he died, his grandson Peter, who was about eight years old, became bishop in his place. But little Peter soon died, and then another grandson, John, who was twelve years old, succeeded. When he died, a third grandson, Francis, was made bishop.

During this time, as was natural, the princes of Savoy could do much as they liked in the little state of Geneva. It was for the time their family property. But when bishop Francis died, and there were no more princes of Savoy to put in his place, the new bishop became again an enemy of the Duke of Savoy. The duke wished to retain all the power he had had, when his own relations were bishops. Thus, from about the year 1500, to the year 1513, constant disputes had been going on between the dukes and the

bishops; and by degrees there arose a third party in the city, who desired to have neither duke nor bishop. They were heartily tired of both, and wished Geneva to be a free state.

In the year 1513, the Duke of Savoy persuaded pope Leo X to make another of his family bishop of Geneva. This was John, a son of bishop Francis, who was a little child at the time of his father's death. This child had grown up a miserable object, and as wicked as he was sickly and repulsive. The duke thought he would be a willing tool in his hands for bringing Geneva into subjection to the house of Savoy. The pope much wanted the Duke of Savoy to give his sister in marriage to his brother, Julian de Medicis. The duke was easily won over to do this by the pope's consenting to make the wretched John bishop of Geneva. Thus were matters managed in the "holy Catholic church."

It was to be supposed that when the citizens of Geneva again found themselves in the power of the Duke of Savoy, and under the tyrannical rule of the vile and cruel bishop, they would long all the more for the liberty which seemed farther off than ever. Some amongst them determined to take a bold step. They went into Switzerland to ask for the help of Fribourg and of Berne against their tyrants. They knew the Swiss loved liberty for themselves and for others. They told the sad tale of their oppression, —of the crimes and vices of John, and the tyranny of the Duke of Savoy. The Swiss promised to be their friends and allies. But this act of the citizens only roused John to fresh cruelties. Years of misery were still in store for Geneva.

The citizens who made the league with Switzerland were called Huguenots, a mispronunciation of a German word, which means "confederates bound by an oath."



I have thought it needful to tell you this because you will hear much of the Huguenots, and you might otherwise suppose that the name meant the same as Protestants, the French Protestants being in later times called Huguenots. But the Huguenots at Geneva were still, more or less, Roman Catholics. It was love of freedom, not a love for the gospel, which gave to some of them a liking for the gossellers, of whom they had heard in Switzerland and elsewhere. They did not understand what the gospel really was, but it seemed to them that by means of it, whatever it was, the Swiss had become free. Some of them, for the sake of liberty, would have liked to get rid of the priests altogether. All of them would gladly have rid themselves of the cruel and tyrannical John.

This did not really make their case a more hopeful one. It is a greater difficulty for a preacher of the gospel when he meets with those who would accept it as-a means of bettering their condition in this world, than when he meets with those who oppose it from enmity, or from an honest conviction that it is wrong.

It would be easier to deal with Elizabeth Arnex and the monks of Granson, than with the Huguenots of Geneva. The Huguenots would allow the gospel to be preached, the monks would hinder it. But in the case of the Huguenots who listened to it, it was far more difficult than in the case of the priests and monks to distinguish the work of God from natural feeling. We naturally approve of anything which seems likely to make this world a pleasanter place to live in.

And thus from time to time gospel books, and even gospel preachers from Switzerland, had been welcomed at Geneva with joy. Here and there, there may have been some weary soul really brought to Christ. But there were

many who were ready for freedom's sake to declare themselves on the side of the gospel.

In the year 1522 John died. His profligate life had brought him to a miserable end. The new bishop was called Peter de la Baume.

He is thus described to us by a prior of Geneva: — “Peter de la Baume was a very proud man, and thought to set himself up above others, not by nobleness of mind or by virtue, but on account of his family; and to keep up his dignity he found it needful to make a great display of pomps and shows. He thought it was the chief merit of a bishop to have a table well spread, or rather well loaded, and with all manner of good wine, of which he would have on his table more than thirty-one different sorts all at once. He was also a great whip, and a very hard rider — he would gallop one horse, leading another by the bridle, of which he was very proud, wishing in this respect to copy the cardinal of Sion, who was esteemed to be the shrewdest man of his time. Peter de la Baume tried to resemble him in shrewdness, as he could not do so in virtue, for the cardinal, if his morals were not good, knew at least how to keep up a sober and respectable appearance, and could give a reason for all he did. But the bishop was just the contrary, for what the cardinal did with his mind clear, the bishop did after drinking. He would do one thing before dinner, and just the contrary afterwards.” Such was the new pastor of Geneva.

This unhappy man found himself in a sea of troubles. The Duke of Savoy and the Huguenots alike wished to get rid of him. The nobles of Geneva were jealous of his power. Even the priests became his enemies for, to make friends with the Huguenots he quarrelled with them. His history is, in fact, a series of attempts to make friends with the duke, the Huguenots, the nobles, the priests, and even the Swiss, always in the hope that one of these parties

would defend him against the rest. But by this means he offended all. Everyone was in turn his enemy.

At last, in the year 1527, an event happened, by which the citizens were suddenly freed from his presence, though not yet entirely from his power.

A report spread through the town that a girl of respectable family had been dragged off by force to the bishop's palace, and that the doors had been shut in the face of her mother, who had run to the rescue. A crowd collected round the palace. The Huguenots hammered loudly at the doors, and demanded admittance. But the bishop was at dinner, and would not be disturbed. The magistrates were sent for, and the bishop was obliged to allow them entrance. They found him thoroughly frightened, pale and trembling. He was obliged to restore the girl. He said she had been taken to be given to a harper, instead of wages.

The whole town was now roused against the bishop. The Duke of Savoy thought it would be a good moment to seize upon him and carry him off, as he would now have no friends to defend his cause. The bishop, warned of the duke's plot, fled by night, and made the best of his way to his castle in Burgundy. The Huguenots had helped him to escape. They were only too glad to take leave of him. For the next few years the unhappy man made ceaseless attempts to gain friends who would restore him to his diocese. Sometimes he appealed to the Duke of Savoy, sometimes to the Emperor Charles V., sometimes to the pope. He threatened the Genevans, and wrote them angry letters, which they received with silent contempt. But they always remembered he was waiting to seize his opportunity for returning, and if he could be kept at a distance by means of the gospel, they would welcome the gospel preachers.

The Duke of Savoy, too, continued to threaten them with his armies. They looked to the Swiss, to Berne chiefly, to defend them from the soldiers of Savoy. And if, to please the Bernese, they found it was needful to defend the cause of the gossellers, they were ready to do so. These were not high motives. But at the same time these Huguenots were not hypocrites. They seem to have had no higher thoughts of the gospel, than that it was a means for making men more free and happy. A hypocrite is one who knows that the gospel is to fit men for Heaven, but who helps it forward as a means of making himself greater, or richer, or more at ease upon the earth.

I should further tell you, that whilst some of the Huguenots were thoroughly papists, others had a leaning, from motives more or less good, towards the faith preached by the gossellers. At the head of the former party was a citizen, called Hugues; at the head of the latter, a citizen called Bandichon.

In the absence of the bishop, the affairs of the church of Rome at Geneva were managed by his vicar; and as there were seven hundred priests living in the town, there was a strong party of papists who were not Huguenots at all. Those Huguenots, who were decided papists, were more anxious to defend Geneva from Savoy than to lessen the power of the bishop and the priests. The other party of Huguenots wished to be free from Savoy, pope, bishop, and priests, all alike.

Tidings of these things had often reached William Farel, whilst he was fighting the Lord's battles at Neuchâtel, at Orbe, and at Granson. You now understand why he had so often longed to be at Geneva. He knew that the great desire of the Huguenots was simply freedom from their tyrants; but he heard also from time to time that there were some who were, as he said, "meditating on the work of Christ"

Farel had written to Zwingli, telling him his longing after the souls of the Genevans. "As to the depth of their desire after piety," he wrote, "that is known only to the Lord." But he knew enough to feel sure that there were some hearts which God had touched. Could he have torn himself away from the towns and villages of Switzerland, he would have gone at once to brave the perils of Geneva.

They were not greater than those amongst which he was daily living. To be threatened one day with a pistol, to be attacked another day by a monk armed with a knife, were common events. But the Lord's work was to be done, and he could not leave it. Would no one in the meantime dare to go to Geneva in his stead?

Do you remember young Peter Toussaint, who had so bitterly reproached Master Faber for his timidity? He arrived at Zurich just when Farel was looking around him for the man who would take the gospel to the Huguenots. Farel wrote to Zwingli, entreating him to send Peter Toussaint. Zwingli did his best He entreated Peter to go at once. But Peter, who had blamed Master Faber, shrank in terror from the thought of Geneva. He at once refused to go. Farel heard the news with bitter sorrow. He could only turn to the Lord, who had never failed him. "O Christ!" he said, "draw up Thine army according to Thine own good pleasure, take away all the sluggishness from the hearts of those who are to give Thee glory, and arouse them mightily from their slumbers!"

Berne meanwhile took no decided measures to help forward the cause of the gospel at Geneva, With Fribourg against them, and the Roman Catholic cantons of German Switzerland already in arms, the Bernese hung back, and turned a deaf ear to the entreaties of Bandichon and his friends, that they would rid Geneva of the mass, the images, and the priests.

Thus for a while the Genevans waited in vain for the helping hand for which they were longing. God's time was not yet come. He was deepening His work in the hearts of some, to whom Christ was already precious. He was preparing a people who should welcome the blessed tidings when He should send a messenger of peace. Day by day the little sparks of light spread and increased, and day by day William Farel carried Geneva in his heart before God.

You will now be better able to understand the events that followed upon that evening when Farel on his white horse, and Saunier on his black one, rode into the ancient city. But fully to comprehend why there were so many of the Citizens who longed to be freed from the duke and bishop, you would have to read histories of the crimes and vices and cruelties of these men, for which there is no space here. Nor would such a history be an edifying one. Of the bishop, the Genevans said, "He has no more thought of the life to come than if he were a cow or a horse." At the time when William Farel arrived, he was living in Burgundy, where he said he had far better wine than he could get at Geneva. There we will leave him for the present.

It was on a fine autumn day, October 2, 1532, when Farel and Saunier caught sight of the three old towers of Geneva cathedral. They rode into the town to an inn to which they had been recommended. It was called the Tour Perce.

Farel went out at once to deliver the letters he had brought from Berne for the chief Huguenot leaders. Great was the surprise and delight of the Huguenots when they found that the bearer was really William Farel. How often had they heard of the wonderful preacher, whose voice of thunder had, as they thought, overthrown popery at Aigle, at Morat, at Neuchâtel, at Orbe, at Granson, and in towns and villages far and near! To them, it was

Farel who had done this work. The natural man understands not that all power is in God; that we but “receive power” when “the Holy Ghost has come upon us, and so become the witnesses of Christ even to the ends of the earth. They looked, therefore, at Farel with wonder and joy. All were ready to hear him, and the news spread like wild-fire through the city that “the scourge of the priests” was come.

One of the nuns of St. Claire, Sister Jane, of whom we shall hear more, wrote that evening in her journal, “A shabby little preacher, one Master William, a native of Dauphiny, has just arrived in the city.”

Next morning, one by one, the Huguenots arrived at the Tour Perce. The chief citizens of Geneva were amongst them. Farel welcomed them with courtesy. They readily told him how they longed for freedom, and for Bible teaching. They would gladly have neither pope nor priests. The pope was a tyrant, the priest’s profligate and vicious, and they would be better off if the whole mass of them were swept away.

But Farel observed they had no thought that they themselves needed the gospel as lost and guilty sinners. “Their thought of true religion,” he said afterwards, “is to eat meat on a Friday and abuse the priests.” He had not come to Geneva to free them from the pope or the duke, but from Satan, and from themselves.

“You need the gospel for yourselves,” he said, “there is a freedom for the soul, the freedom with which Christ makes free, and He has sent me to tell you of that.”

They said they knew they needed teaching; they were ready to listen. The landlord brought in benches and stools. Farel stood up before a little table, upon which he placed a Bible.

“It is this book,” he said—” this book only—which will teach you to know Jesus Christ If it is lawful for you to throw off tyranny in earthly things, it is needful for you to throw it off in Heavenly things—to shut your ears to popes, to councils, and to priests, and to listen to God only, speaking in His Word.”

He preached to them in simple words, and they listened eagerly. As they rose to go they thanked him, and as they walked home they said to one another, “Our Master should be neither the bishop, nor the Duke of Savoy, nor St. Peter himself, but the Lord Jesus Christ alone.”

There was to be a second meeting that same day. The tidings came to the priests and canons, and filled them with fear and grief. Farel had appeared amongst them as a thunderbolt. What was to be done!

“This wretched preacher,” wrote Sister Jane,” is beginning to speak secretly at his quarters in a room, seeking to infect the people with his heresy.”

The second meeting was far more crowded than the first Farel had in the morning spoken chiefly about the authority of Scripture. He now spoke of the free grace of God—the free pardon for guilty sinners—spoken not by a priest, but by God Himself. “Whilst the priests,” he said, “build up straw and stubble into the temple of God, He brings the living stones, the souls whom He has saved. He saves wholly and entirely. It is not partly the work of Christ, and partly the work of man—fasts and pilgrimages, prayers and penances. Christ does not do a part, He does the whole—He, and none besides.”

When the preaching was over, many citizens entreated Farel to come and explain the Bible to them at home. It was beginning to dawn upon them that the glad tidings meant something far beyond freedom and happiness here



below. They were beginning to see in Christ some beauty that they should desire Him. Amongst those who thus listened gladly was a cap-maker, called Guérin, of whom you will hear more shortly.

Meanwhile other citizens, urged on by their wives and by the priests, came in hot anger to the Tour Perce, and commanded Farel to leave the town at once. The streets were filled with priests, eagerly endeavouring to raise a riot.

The magistrates, alarmed at the commotion, sent for Farel and Saunier to appear at the town hall and give an account of their doings. Most of these magistrates were neither for nor against the gospel. They did not wish to offend the priests. They wished still less to offend Berne. They had no clear idea what course they ought to take.

As the preachers were brought in, all looked with curiosity at the man, of whom they had heard “that he set the country in a blaze from the Alps to the Jura.”

“It is you, then,” said one of the magistrates, “who do nothing but disturb the world, and stir up rebellion everywhere. You are a busybody, who have only come here to do mischief. We order you to depart from this city at once.”

Farel replied calmly, “I do not stir up rebellion. I only preach the truth. I am ready to prove out of God’s Word that what I preach is true. I am ready also not only to sacrifice my ease, but to shed the last drop of my blood for it.”

The Huguenot magistrates looked with admiration at Farel, and spoke out in his defence. Farel then shewed to the council the letters he had brought from Berne, recommending him to their friends and allies at Geneva. This was an important matter for the magistrates. They all agreed to send away

the two preachers without threatening. They only begged them not to disturb the peace of the town.

Meanwhile another council was being held at the house of the bishop's vicar, where the priests were gathered together. The heretics, of whom they had heard for years, were amongst them at last. What was to be done? The vicar himself was afraid to do too much. Many of the priests thought him tame and timid.

“Not only the preachers,” they said, “ought to be punished, but all the citizens who have invited them to their houses, and who want to live differently from what their bishops and pastors have taught them.”

“We must condemn nobody unheard,” said the vicar.

“If we dispute,” replied one of the priests, “there is an end of it. It is as much as saying that people may dare to have opinions as to what the church teaches.”

Most of the priests agreed that it would not do to hear Farel's defence. He must be condemned without having an opportunity of speaking.

But some of the priests opposed this. “Let him come,” they said, “and explain what he preached at the inn.” These priests gained their point. But they had made this plan for the same reason as that which led the chief priests of Jerusalem to request that Paul might be again brought before the council. They had “banded themselves together” to kill him. They were determined that he should never leave the vicar's house alive, if once they could get him into it. Sister Jane in her journal tells us that this was their plot. She saw no harm in it; on the contrary, she thought it would be a work well-pleasing to God.

A messenger was sent to the Tour Perce to desire Farel and Saunier to appear, and to explain to the priests what it was they taught. The

Huguenots, meanwhile, who were on the watch, suspected what the priests were about, and some of them went to the inn to entreat Farel to go away at once to save his life. But during their entreaties the vicar's message arrived. Farel and Saunier were delighted to have such an opportunity for preaching the gospel. They turned a deaf ear to the Huguenots, and, taking Robert Olivetan with them, set off for the vicar's house.

They had had hard work to get from the magistrates' council to the inn, so great was the crowd that had gathered; they had far harder work to get from the inn to the vicar's house. The streets were filled with armed priests, who were urging on the mob to mock and insult them. "Look at the dogs! look at the dogs!" shouted the rabble. But otherwise unhurt, they reached the house where death awaited them. Not only the priests who were there assembled, but those who crowded the street outside the house, had alike sworn that Farel should die then and there.

But two Huguenot magistrates had reached the house first, and for awhile the three preachers were kept waiting outside the council-room. The magistrates were demanding a promise from the priests that no harm should be done to the gospellers. The priests promised all that they were asked. The two Huguenots however thought it best to remain there. They could not trust the word of the priests.

At last the preachers were called in.

The vicar sat in his gorgeous robes; the chief priests, also dressed in their various trappings, sat on his right hand and on his left

One of them, called De Veigy, rose up and said, "William Farel, tell me who has sent you, and for what reason you come here?"

"God sent me," replied Farel, "and I am come to preach His Word."

"Poor wretch!" said the priests, looking at him with disgust.

“God has sent you,” continued De Veigy; “can you show us a miracle to prove that, as Moses showed Pharaoh? If not, show us the licence of the bishop—no one ever preaches here without leave from him;” and then, looking Farel over from head to foot, he continued, “You are not dressed like our preachers—you are dressed like a soldier of a thief. How dare you preach! Don’t you know the church has forbidden laymen to preach? You are an impostor and a scoundrel.”

“Jesus Christ,” replied Farel, “has commanded, ‘preach the gospel to every creature.’ The true successors of the apostles to whom He spake those words, are those that conform to Christ’s order. The pope and all his tribe have no claim therefore to that name. They no longer care for the words of Christ”

But Farel’s words were drowned in the sudden uproar which arose. The priests, pale with anger, clattered with their feet, and arose, speaking all at once, and shouting names of insult and contempt. They rushed upon Farel. Some pulled him one way, some another. “Farel, you wicked devil!” they shouted, “what business have you to go about turning the world upside down?” One asked him one question, one asked another; and neither Farel’s voice nor the vicar’s could be heard in the frightful din. At last by signs and gestures the vicar compelled the priests to sit down and be silent.

Then Farel, lifting up his head, said boldly and simply, “My lords, I am not a devil. If I journey to and fro, it is that I may preach Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ crucified—dead for our sins, risen again for our justification—so that whosoever believeth in Him hath everlasting life. He has sent me, therefore I am compelled to teach Him to all who are willing to hear. I have no other right to speak than that God has commanded me. My only desire is so to speak that all may be saved. It is for this cause and no other that I

came to Geneva. You have sent for me to give an account of my faith. I am ready to do so, not only at this moment, but as many times as you please to hear me peaceably. What I have preached, and still preach, is the truth. It is not heresy, and I will maintain it even unto death. And as for what you say about my disturbing the land, and this city in particular, I will answer as Elijah did to Ahab, 'I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house.' Yes, it is you and yours who trouble the world by your traditions, your human inventions, and your dissolute lives."

The priests, who had listened in awe-struck silence till these last words were spoken, now sprang to their feet. "He has spoken blasphemy!" shouted one of them. "What further need have we of witnesses? He is guilty of death."

Farel turned and faced him. "Speak the words of God," he said, "not the words of Caiaphas."

This speech raised the fury of the priests to its highest pitch. "Kill him! Kill the Lutheran hound! To the Rhone! to the Rhone! Kill him! kill him!" rang from every corner of the council chamber. "Strike him! beat him!" shouted the proctor, and in a moment the furious priests fell upon the three preachers. They abused them, beat them, spat in their faces, yelled and shrieked, till the uproar was deafening.

The vicar, the two Huguenots, and a few of the priests ashamed of such a scene, endeavoured to put an end to it.

"You are wicked men!" exclaimed Hugues, the Huguenot. "You promised to do no harm to these men. We brought them here, trusting to your word, and you want to beat and kill them before our faces. I will go and ring the great bell to call together the city council. This matter shall be settled by the people of Geneva."

The priests were frightened. It was quite possible that if the town council met, the citizens might make this riot a pretext of banishing the priests in a body. They sat down, looking ashamed and anxious.

The vicar told Farel and his friends to leave the room, that the assembled priests might consult what should next be done.

The three preachers went out into the long gallery, bearing many marks of the blows and spitting of their assailants.

Meantime the crowd outside the house was becoming impatient at the long sitting of the priests' council. Their numbers increased with their noise. The preachers in the gallery heard on the one side the loud and angry voices of the priests in the council chamber, on the other side the shouts and cries of the crowd, which filled not only the street, but the court and garden. Eighty stout priests had posted themselves before the entrance, "all well-armed with clubs to defend the holy Catholic faith." They watched every door, determined that neither of the preachers should escape.

"They wished," writes Sister Jane, "to put that wretch and his accomplices to a bitter death."

As the shouts rose louder, and the tumult in the council chamber increased, Farel and his friends paced the gallery. A servant of the vicar, Francis Olard, stood at the further end. He had been posted there as sentinel, a gun in his hand. Excited by the shouts, and by the sight of the "great heretics," he levelled his gun at Farel and pulled the trigger. There was a flash, but the gun did not go off. Farel turned to him, and said coldly, "I am not to be shaken by a pop-gun." God had again, as on so many former occasions, turned aside the weapon aimed at His servant.

The door of the council chamber was at last opened, and the preachers were called in to hear their sentence. The threats and persuasions of the two

Huguenot magistrates gained the day. The priests were terribly afraid of the wrath of Berne, and this, said the Huguenots, they would have a taste of, if they dared to touch William Farel. The vicar, therefore, arose and commanded the three preachers to leave his presence, and depart from the city within six hours. If they refused, they should at once be burnt.

The news of this sentence quickly found its way to the crowd in the streets. As Farel approached the door they thronged around it. The priests with their clubs were foremost, gnashing their teeth like enraged tigers, and yelling in their fury.

Farel stood for an instant to consider what he should do. The next moment would most likely be his last.

“The villain dared not come out,” writes Sister Jane, “he feared the church people would put him to death.”

Two of the priests from within now rushed upon Farel to drive him from the house. “Go out!” they shouted, “in the name of all the devils, whose servant you are!” “One of them,” writes Sister Jane, who was proud of their exploits, “gave him a hard kick, another beat him soundly on the head and face, and thus thrust him out with his two companions.” But the kicks and blows of the two priests within the house were as nothing in comparison with the raging sea of furious priests without. For a moment all seemed over with the preachers. But suddenly the crowd fell back with terror in their faces. The magistrates with an armed guard had been on the watch. They made their way through the mob. They placed the preachers in the midst of the guard, who cleared away with their halberds, and took the road to the Tour Perce.

But the eighty armed priests were not to be so easily discomfited. They ran on, and stationed themselves in a street which formed the only way to

the Tour Perce.

“The worthy men could not be satisfied,” writes Sister Jane, “that the heretics should be only expelled from the city.”

As the guard drew near, one of “the worthy men” rushed forward, sword in hand, to run Farel through. “Hold there,” said a magistrate, seizing the arm of the assassin. “Many were grieved,” continues Sister Jane, “because the blow failed.”

The priests saw their case was hopeless. They now contented themselves with hissing and hooting, and the cries “To the Rhone with them!” sounded in the ears of the preachers till they were safely lodged in the Tour Perce. A guard was placed before the door.

The three friends now consulted together what was to be done. They felt that they must go. Christ had said, “When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.” It was very sad to them to leave the hungry souls who had welcomed them so gladly.

“They shall hear the gospel yet, in God’s own time,” said Farel. “He will make the way for it.”

Very early in the morning, four Huguenots came to the inn. They had made ready a boat to convey the preachers over the lake. But the priests were earlier still. They were gathered in the streets ready for an attack. “There go the devils!” they shouted as the little party appeared. Seven men—four Huguenots, and the three preachers. But they dared not touch them. The hand of God was again over His beloved servant. They reached the boat in safety. The Huguenots seized the oars, and unharmed, as God’s three servants from the fiery furnace of Babylon, the three preachers were borne away over the waters of the beautiful lake, leaving the angry crowd hooting upon the shore.



Far away they went—the Huguenots would not land them at any town or village, but took them to a lonely place on the shore between Merges and Lausanne. Here they all disembarked. They embraced each other with warm affection. Then the Huguenots returned to Geneva with Robert Olivetan, and the two preachers took the road to Orbe. Thus ended Farel's two days at Geneva.

## Chapter 46

### THE SECOND ONSLAUGHT UPON GENEVA

**B**ut the two days at Geneva had by no means discouraged Farel. On the contrary, the thought of the hungry souls whom he had left behind, only strengthened his longing for the day when Geneva should “be taken for Christ.”

After a few days at Orbe, he journeyed on to Granson. At this place he found Anthony Froment, who, young as he was, had become the pastor of the little flock at the village of Yvonand, not far off. But Farel had other plans for Anthony Froment. He determined to send him at once to face the “stout priests” of Geneva. You know, from the story of Boudevilliers, that Anthony was not wanting in courage. But he was scarcely twenty-two years old. He was of mean appearance, he was shy, and he was small in stature. He had, however, one qualification which was a great one in the eyes of Farel, and which he possessed beyond many others. This was, that he was “nobody.” To Anthony therefore Farel betook himself. He related his adventures at Geneva, and described how the Huguenots were waiting eagerly to hear the blessed gospel.

Froment listened with the deepest interest. Then Farel fixed his eyes upon the young man, and said, "Go and try if you can find an open door at Geneva."

Froment stood speechless. "How should I dare," he said at last, "to face the enemies who drove away even you, Master Farel?"

Farel said, "Begin as I did at Aigle. I became a schoolmaster, and taught little children, and took any opportunity I could find to speak of Christ to one and to another, till the door was opened for me to preach." Froment began to think this might be almost possible for him. And Farel, to encourage him further, said, "Dear Anthony, do you not remember how you and I went to Neuchâtel, and the villages near? Do you not remember the blows and abuses we got so often? Once, you know, at Valangin, you saw how my blood bespattered that little chapel, where I was nearly killed. You have seen enough of what it is to fight the Lord's battles, not to fear the men of Geneva."

But these recollections failed to give courage to Anthony. And the other preachers also thought that he was far too young to be thus sent into the lions' den. Anthony said he could not go.

In the meantime, Anthony Saunier, with Robert Olivetan, and several other preachers, set off on a fresh journey to the valleys of the Waldenses. Their chief object was to talk over with the barbes some plan for a fresh translation of the Bible into French. They wished to begin this work at once, and to supply the Waldenses with printed Bibles as soon as possible. The Waldenses were delighted. They collected no less than 500 golden crowns, which they gave to Robert towards the expenses of printing. It must have cost them many a meal, and many a warm coat, to provide such a large sum.

The work was begun, and for a time Farel undertook to revise the translation. Later on, he made over this part of the work to Robert.

At the end of October, Farel again appeared at Yvonand.

“Anthony Froment,” he said, “once more I ask you, whether, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will go to Geneva?”

Anthony replied as before, that he was young, and weak, and of no repute, and that Geneva was the stronghold of the enemy. “Fear nothing,” said Farel, “it is a great thing to be nobody. You can then be free of everybody. Nobody will attend to what you do. God will guide you, and will guide you in His own path.”

Anthony felt that the message came to him from God. It was not to please Farel, but to please Christ, that he would dare to go. He fell on his knees. “O God,” he said, “I trust not in the power of man, I place myself entirely in Thy hands. To Thee I commit my cause, praying Thee to guide it, for it is Thine.” He called together the little flock at Yvonand to take leave of them. They all joined with him in prayer, saying, “O God, give him grace to be useful for making known Thy Word.” Then he embraced them and Farel, and departed for Geneva, amidst their prayers and blessings.

He went by way of Lausanne, along the shores of the lake of Geneva. Sometimes he stopped and asked himself whether he was not mad to have undertaken such a task. But the words of God came to him with power—“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.”

And thus strengthened, Anthony went on.

The people of Geneva were just then much disturbed by the sight of a blazing object in the sky every night. It seems from the description to have been a comet. But they imagined it to be a sign that some great event was going to take place. At this time Anthony arrived. They little knew how great an event was that.

Nor had Anthony any reason to think that his arrival at Geneva was of any importance. He felt shy and strange, with only unknown faces around him. No one knew him or cared for him, and he got short answers from every one. He remembered the names of the chief Huguenots, Farel's friends, and he called upon them. But they looked at him coldly, almost scornfully. Farel, they thought, might at least have sent them a learned doctor, not a mean shabby looking working man, almost a boy. They would be ashamed of having Anthony as their spokesman with the learned clever priests of Geneva.

So poor little Anthony had every door closed in his face. He walked back to his inn, sad and perplexed. It was quite clear that even the Huguenots, who wished for the gospel, despised him, and would have nothing to say to him. He therefore went to his landlord, paid his bill, packed up his little bundle, and turning his steps to the Swiss gate, he left the city of Geneva.

## Chapter 47

### THE THIRD ONSLAUGHT UPON GENEVA

Thus ended Anthony's visit, you will say.

But it was not so. He had not gone many yards from the city, when he stopped short. He did not as Balaam did— see an angel in the way with a drawn sword in his hand. But he felt, just as much as if he had seen it, that the Lord stood in the way against him. And Anthony turned round, went back to his inn, and shut himself up in his room. He leaned on the table with his head in his hands, and asked the Lord what He wanted with him.

As he prayed the answer came—" I will lead thee in the way in which thou shouldst walk." And then suddenly came back to him the words of Farel—" I became a schoolmaster at Aigle, and taught little children."

All now became clear to him. He had wished to be something. He had been disappointed because the Huguenots had not received him as a preacher, and had despised his mean appearance. He had not been contented to begin a little humble work, taking his task simply from God, and seeking nothing from men. He saw now what he ought to do.

He asked a man, whose acquaintance he had made in the street, if he knew of any room that he might hire for a school. "There is the great hall at the Golden Cross," replied his friend. So they went there together, and Anthony hired it. He then returned to his inn. In his best handwriting he wrote the following placard: —

"A man has just arrived in this city, who engages to teach reading and writing in French, in one month, to all who will come to him, young and old, men and women, even such as have never been to school; and if they cannot read and write within the said month, he asks nothing for his trouble. He will be found at the large room, at the sign of the Golden Cross. Many diseases are also cured gratis." Anthony made several copies of this placard. He then went out, and stuck them up in conspicuous places. Many people stopped to read them. Some felt inclined to go to the new school. But the priests suspected mischief. "He is a devil," said one of them standing in the crowd, "all who go there will be bewitched." In spite of this warning, a number of boys and girls made their appearance at the Golden Cross, where Anthony sat waiting. When the lessons were over, he read them a few verses from the New Testament, and explained them simply and clearly. Then he asked them if any in their families were sick, and gave them harmless medicines to take home. The children had long stories to tell at home about the new master. They got other children to come, and even stopped men and women in the streets, and said, "Won't you come to hear that man at the Golden Cross?"

Very soon the whole city had heard of the young Frenchman and his school. And it was not long before fathers and mothers determined to go too, and hear for themselves.

Some of the Huguenots were the first who went. They hoped that the schoolmaster would say something in his little sermons against the priests and the mass. They sat behind the children, waiting till the lessons were over. They were charmed with the lessons. The children were taught even more than the placard had promised—not only reading and writing, but also arithmetic.

At last the little sermon began. Anthony read a Bible story, and explained the difficult words as he went on. He then spoke a few words, very simply and lovingly, telling his hearers what it was that God desired them to learn from the verses he had read. All eyes were fixed upon him as he spoke. The people, as they went out, said they had never heard such teaching. Not a word about the priests, but much about Christ. They told all their friends of the beautiful preaching at the Golden Cross.

Soon the great hall became crowded with men, women, and children. They came long before the time, to be sure of getting places. The Duke of Savoy and the bishop were forgotten. We are told, everyone was full of the wonderful sermons. “How different it is from the priests’ sermons!” they said. “The priests chirp out sacred things in a profane way; their preaching is full of fine words and affectation, but no reverence for God.” You may suppose that the priests were now becoming alarmed. They all, with one consent, said that Anthony was a sorcerer. They called after any man or woman who was going to the Golden Cross, “Ho! ho! there goes one of the possessed!” But they might as well have mocked at the wind. Every day the crowd at the Golden Cross was larger, and many returned, praising and glorifying God. They had learnt the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.



Guérin, the cap-maker, made a bold confession of Christ, and began himself to preach the glad tidings. Towards the end of November, a letter was brought to him from William Farel, who had heard the good news.

“Grace, mercy, and peace from God, our merciful Father, by the only Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus.

“My very dear brother, —Since it has happened to you according to the desires of our heart, believe that we are very greatly rejoicing, and looking to the Father, who has brought you thus far, to finish His work. In the meantime, follow on as you have begun, in strength, vigour, diligence, love, wisdom, and knowledge, keeping to the word of the great Master, ‘Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves;’ being a true follower of the Saviour, who took the children in His arms so lovingly, and called them blessed, and at the same time called him Satan who had been praised and called blessed before, because he savoured not the things that were of God, but the things that were of men. Thus, be you all things to all men, great with the great, small with the small, weak with the weak, that you may gain all. And as you have to teach others to put their whole trust in God, see above all things that you do that, and that you are looking above all things to the great power of the Lord, for He will do all things well, if only we will simply trust in Him. The offence of the cross is a thing that must needs be, and the confusion of the adversaries must needs be also, but in the Lord’s good time: for He will have the honour of all that is done, and the less there is of man’s help, the more is there of His help. He desires that we should go on in the great fear of His name, without looking to man. I know and am assured that the poor shavelings (the priests) have, in all that they have done, only worked out their own ruin. But I desire not to harm, but to profit. We must go on in patience, and trusting in God, and we shall soon see His

help appear. “My very dear brother, I pray you to teach in such a manner as if you had to prove your words to everybody, down to the smallest letter, using purely and simply the words of holy Scripture, avoiding not only phrases and ways of speaking which are not in the Scripture, but also avoiding words which are not found in Scripture, never mind who may use them besides. Blessing, grace, peace and mercy from God be with you. Let us hear news of you; and if you cannot do great things, do small ones, as the Lord shall give you grace.”

“Yours, with a whole heart,

“WILLIAM FAREL.”

## Chapter 48

### THE BEWITCHED LADY

**S**ome of the Huguenots, it is true, took part with Anthony, for no better reason than that they hoped the preaching would in time rid them of the priests. But very many had really been turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

The priests and monks thought it was time to bestir themselves. They went from house to house, warning the people. They harangued them in the streets and markets. “What can that little fool know?” they said:” he is scarcely twenty-two, and he is a devil.” “That fool,” answered the people, “will teach you to be wise. That devil will cast out the devil that is in you.” And thus day by day were souls saved. It was a great and marvellous work that God was then doing in Geneva—a work at which we must look back with awe and wonder—a work for which we may praise Him still. His strength was indeed made perfect in the weakness of Anthony Froment.

One day two ladies came in the crowd to the Golden Cross. One of them had a sweet but grave countenance, and was plainly and simply dressed. The other was resplendent with all sorts of finery. She wore also a number

of crosses and rosaries. It is by the cross of Christ that the world is crucified to us (if we are really Christians) and we to the world. Yet the crosses of gold and silver, wood and stone, are commonly to be met with in the company of costly lace and jewels, and worldly adornments. This bedizened lady sat down just opposite little Anthony, with a look of mockery and derision. Her companion sat beside her,

Anthony came forward with a book in his hand, and got up on a round table, as was his custom, in order to be better heard. He read a few words from his book, and began to explain them. Meanwhile the smart lady crossed herself again and again, and murmured Ave Marias and Paternosters. Anthony spoke on. He told of the love of God, who sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. He told of the free forgiveness, and the perfect salvation which are for every weary soul that comes to Christ.

The look of mockery passed away from the face of the lady. She fixed her eyes with wonder and rapt attention upon Anthony's face. It was another voice that was speaking to her—not the voice of the little preacher, but a voice from Heaven—that voice which the dead hear, and awaken to everlasting life. What was that book from which the preacher read those wonderful words—those words that seemed to her to come directly from the mouth of God?

The sermon was over: the children went out, followed by the older people; but the lady sat still in her place. Anthony got down from the table. "Is it true what you say?" asked the lady, suddenly rising up. "Yes," answered Anthony. "Is that book really a New Testament?" "Yes." "Is the mass mentioned in it?" "No!" The lady hesitated a moment, and then said,

“Will you lend it me?” Anthony gladly gave it to her. She hid it carefully under her cloak, and went out with her friend.

She scarcely spoke a word on the way home. When she reached the house, she went straight to her room, and shut herself in alone with the Book. She told her family not to come to her room, not to knock at her door, not to wait at meals for her.

Three days and three nights passed. She remained in her room, neither eating nor drinking, but praying and reading. The Book lay open on the table before her. At the end of the three days she came forth. She said, “The Lord has forgiven me, and saved me. He has given me the living water.”

She now desired to see Anthony, and to tell him what the Lord had done for her. A messenger was sent to fetch him. When he came in, she rose up, and went to meet him, but she could not speak. “Her tears,” said Anthony, “fell on the floor.” At last she begged Anthony to sit down, and she told him that God had opened Heaven to her, sinner as she was, and had saved her by the precious blood of His Son. Anthony could only listen in wonder and joy. She went on to tell that she had been brought to the preaching by her sister-in-law, Paula Levet. Paula had very often entreated her to come, but she had refused again and again, for she feared lest she should be bewitched. The priests had said that whoever heard the heretic preach would be not only bewitched, but damned. At last, however, out of love for Paula, she had made up her mind to go. She had fastened fresh-gathered rosemary leaves to her temples, had rubbed her breast with virgin wax, and had hung relics of the saints around her neck, with crosses and rosaries in addition. She thus hoped to be safe from the enchantments of little Anthony; and she thought that having heard the preaching, she might be able to prove to Paula it was heresy.

“And now,” she said, “how can I ever thank God enough that He has opened my blind eyes?”

One day, just after this, Claudine Levet—for this was the lady’s name—again shut herself up in her room. She there took off all her finery, her jewels, and costly attire, and dressed herself in a plain and modest dress. She sold her ornaments and trappings, and gave the money to the poor, especially to any of the Lord’s poor saints who had come to take refuge in Geneva from the persecutions in France. She opened her house to these banished followers of Christ; she spoke openly and meekly of the precious truth the Lord had made known to her.

Her friends were grieved and astonished at this sudden change. One day, when some of them were met together, they talked of nothing but the mysterious transformation of Claudine. “We loved her so much,” they said, “that we lament all the more that she is lost!” She has left off going to the mass, and to every sort of amusement. And so suddenly, too. Ah! she has heard that creature, and has been bewitched by him.” And one and all resolved they would visit her no more.

For a while they kept their resolution, and held aloof. But they watched their old friend; and one by one, they began to feel uneasy when they saw her holy life, her usefulness, her meekness, and gentleness. Could it be, after all, that she was changed for the better? At last they took opportunities of talking to her. Claudine spoke to them lovingly and humbly, and gave them each a New Testament. She told them of the precious love of Christ. Those same ladies, who had talked her over in bitterness and anger, were won to Christ also. They, too, cast aside their fine clothes, and gave their money to those who had need.

It is easy to read these things, and easy to approve of them in other people, especially if they lived some hundreds of years ago. But are we ready to do likewise? “Costly array,” the “lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” are things which are no less of the world, and no more of the Father, in the nineteenth century than they were in the sixteenth. People take solemn vows to “renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world.” Sometimes they take them in the name of children, who are dressed up for the occasion in “christening robes,” the cost of which would comfortably clothe ten or twenty shivering little children of the poor. These vows are “renewed” by the children themselves, just at the time when they are looking forward to “coming out into the world.” Can it be the same “wicked world” they have just sworn they would renounce? We read in the sixth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, of a “coming out,” but it is from not into that world, of which, if we will be the friends, we must be the enemies of God. I would ask you to read those words. They are the commandment of God.

Do you know what it is, thus to come out? And to come out, not as Lot’s wife, looking back to the place of doom, but looking onward and upward to the glory, and to Him who is there—drawn from the world that crucified Him by the power of His love. It is true that worldliness often shews itself in a less vulgar shape than that of jewels or finery, or expensive food and drink. There is a worldliness in things of the mind, as well as in things of the body. There is a worldliness which is intellectual and refined, as well as a worldliness that is low and coarse. But in the one shape or the other, wherever the love of the world is found, it is a sure sign that in that heart the love of the Father is not. What solemn words! But they are the words of God.

You may wonder where Claudine got the New Testaments which she gave to her friends. Farel had sent them to Anthony with tracts and books, supplied by his friends at Lyons. They were Master Faber's Testaments—the only French translation then to be had. Aimé Levet (Claudine's husband) was at first very much displeased; but his wife was so meek and gentle, he began at last to desire himself to read the Word of God, and hear the preaching. He, too, became a believer in Jesus.



## Chapter 49

### AN AFTERNOON AT THE PARSONAGE

In the meantime, the priests became more active than before. One of them, called Claude Pelliez, gave notice that he would preach against the heretics in the large church of which he was the vicar. The church was crowded by the papists. And several of the gospellers went to hear also. The vicar praised “the church,” and the head of it—not Christ, but Clement VII., the pope at Rome. The vicar further described our poor little Anthony as an ignorant liar, and a wolf who prowled around the fold to devour the sheep. After the sermon, four Huguenots called at the vicar’s house. “Froment, they said,” is a good and learned man. You say he has lied. Prove it by the Bible.”

The vicar said he would do so. The Huguenots demanded that he would give his proofs in public. But the vicar said he would only do so in the presence of a few friends at the parsonage. The discussion was fixed for the last afternoon of that year, 1532.

Anthony had, you see, been scarcely two months in Geneva. The work the Lord had already done by him had been as rapid as it was astonishing.

When the afternoon came which Claude had named, the four Huguenots went to the parsonage. Some priests whom the vicar had invited were already there. But the vicar himself was still shut up in his private room. He was looking vainly for texts. He had not yet found one. The Huguenots and the priests sat together for a long time. They drank some wine which they found under the table, and which Perrin, one of the Huguenots, paid for. The vicar did not appear. They were beginning to despair of him, when suddenly he walked in, a huge book under his arm. It was stuck full of slips of paper to mark the places. The vicar opened his book, and read a long piece in contradiction to Froment's sermons. "What book is that?" asked Perrin: "it is not a Bible."

"Ah!" said the others, "you have not been able to find one text in the Bible to suit your purpose."

The priest grew red with anger. "What do you mean?" he said, "this book is the *Postillæ Perpetuæ in Biblia* of the illustrious Nicholas Lyra."

"But you promised to prove Froment wrong out of the Bible," said the Huguenots. "Lyra is the best commentator," said the vicar. "We don't want commentators, we want the Bible," repeated the Huguenots.

Perrin grew angry, and the vicar more so. In fact they both lost their temper completely. Perrin was one of those Huguenots who had taken part with Froment out of dislike to the priests, not out of love to Christ. One of the vicar's friends stole out of the room, and called in a band of armed priests, who were ready waiting—the foremost with a naked sword in his hand. The four Huguenots were indignant at this treachery. They seized the swords they had taken off when they first came into the room, and, making a way through the regiment of priests, rushed into the streets. One of the priests ran to ring the alarm bell in the belfry of the church hard by. Before

the four Huguenots could get away, a crowd had collected. Huguenots and papists alike hurried to the spot

“The Huguenots want to seize the church, and make Froment preach in it!” shouted the priests. A mob rushed forward to attack the four Huguenots. Their friends gathered round them. The shouts and cries from all sides terrified Sister Jane and her nuns behind their convent walls.

“Alas, they are coming in to marry us!” exclaimed the poor ladies, starting up from their dinner, with many tears. They resolved to make a procession round the garden forthwith, to implore Mary to defend them from so terrible a fate.

Meanwhile the magistrates came upon the scene. They dispersed the crowds, and followed the priests into a distant quarter of the town, where they had hoped afresh to raise a riot. The town council then met, to form plans for preventing any further disturbance. The chief Huguenots were summoned to appear.

The magistrates said, “We charge you to stop Anthony Froment’s preaching, either at the Golden Cross or in private houses.”

The Huguenots replied, “We will hear the Word of God wherever we can; no one has a right to stop it.” “The council,” they added, “decreed that the Word of God was to be preached in every parish; but this decree has not been obeyed: we must, therefore, hear Anthony Froment.”

The council now sent for the bishop’s vicar, and begged him to provide preachers. They mentioned especially a Grey Friar, who had preached during advent, and who had been generally liked, because his sermons were neither one thing nor the other. The vicar was to promise that the Word of God should be preached in every parish church. The vicar, who liked a quiet life, was ready to promise everything; and the council, who seemed to think

they could give an order for preachers as they might for musicians or town criers, considered that they had made a satisfactory arrangement.

## *Chapter 50*

### THE SERMON ON THE FISH-STALL

**T**he Huguenots were not as well satisfied. Now that Anthony's preaching was forbidden, they were the more determined to hear it. In the case of some of them, it was no doubt a real desire to hear the gospel, which made them take up Anthony's cause so warmly. In the case of others, it was plain that they were glad of an opportunity of standing up for their own rights, and of shewing that they were not to be domineered over by the priests. They knew the priests were at the bottom of all this. For the one reason or the other, or both, all determined to go in a body to the Golden Cross next morning.

When Anthony started from his inn that New Year's morning to go to his school, he found the streets round the Golden Cross so closely packed with people that it was impossible to make his way. With great effort he succeeded in getting within a short distance of the door; but the doorway, the passages, the stairs, and the great hall were already crowded to suffocation. The mass of people still in the streets were anxious that

Anthony should remain outside. If he once got in, they had no chance of hearing a word.

A man shouted out, "To the Molard!" and in a minute the cry ran through the crowd, "To the Molard!"

The Molard is a large square near the lake, and not very far from the Golden Cross. It is the place where the fish market is held, and where it was held in the days of Froment.

Anthony was speedily carried off to the Molard. The Huguenots cleared a fish stall without ceremony, and hoisted up Anthony to preach from it. The crowd had followed, and the great square was completely filled.

"Preach the Word of God to us!" they shouted on every side; but, so great was the noise, preaching was at first impossible. Anthony made signs to them to be silent. He then got off the stall, and knelt upon the ground. The people were at once quiet. They uncovered their heads; some knelt also. Anthony at first could not speak. The tears ran down his cheeks. At last, lifting up his hands and eyes to Heaven, he prayed in a voice so clear and strong that all could hear. He thanked God that He was the hearer and answerer of prayer—that He was bound by His own promise to hear the prayers of all who draw near to Him through His beloved Son.

"Father," he said, "look down upon Thy poor blind people, led by the blind, so that they both fall into the ditch, and can only be lifted out by Thy mercy." He prayed that the Lord would open their eyes, and open their ears to listen to the Word, though preached to them by one "unworthy to be the bearer of so great a message—one chosen from among the weak things of the world." "Give me, Lord," he said, "strength and wisdom, so that Thy power may be shewn—that it may be seen that Thy power is greater than Satan's, and that Thy strength is not like man's strength."

The people wondered at this prayer. They knew no prayers but those which the priests chanted out of their books. This prayer seemed a reality to them.

Then Anthony stood up on his stall, and took out of his pocket a little book. It was a New Testament. The text he read from it was, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

You can imagine, having heard the text, what was the subject of Anthony’s sermon. He did this time speak of the priests—he spoke openly, boldly, and faithfully. He spoke of the pope, and of the mass. He told the people plainly that they and their fathers had been deceived for a thousand years by wolves in sheep’s clothing, worse than the Pharisees of whom the Lord spoke such solemn words of old. Worse—for they professed to forgive sin, which the Pharisees never dared to do. Worse—for they told men that a piece of bread shut up in a golden box was God Himself.

“Do not believe them!” said Anthony. “Christ, who has ransomed us by His blood, is at the right hand of the Father. Seek Him there—not in a box.” He told them also that Christ had said the Pharisees should be known by their long robes—worn to distinguish them from common men. It was not that the length of a robe made it displeasing to God, but it was worn as a sign that they were not as other men. “Who are those among you,” he said, “who wear vestments, and shave their heads to shew that they are holier than laymen? Look around you, and judge for yourselves.”

In the midst of Anthony’s sermon, arrived a sergeant, sent by the magistrates, to whom the priests had carried the startling news that “the Lutherans had taken their idol to preach in the square.”

“In the name of my lords,” shouted the sergeant, “I command you to cease from preaching!”

Anthony stopped, and answered in a loud voice, “We ought to obey God rather than man.” He then continued his sermon.

The sergeant dared not do more in the presence of the army of Huguenots. He carried back Anthony’s answer to the magistrates. Anthony went on to speak of the evil teaching of the priests—of their profligate lives, and of their human inventions. Suddenly a body of armed men entered the square—magistrates, soldiers, and priests, all alike well provided with swords and guns. Claude Bernard, one of the Huguenots rushed forward. “Save yourself, Anthony Froment!” he shouted at the top of his voice. Anthony, nothing daunted, refused to move, or to break off his preaching. “For God’s honour let us avoid the spilling of blood,” said Bernard, who perceived that a fight was beginning. Froment saw it was right to give way. His friends dragged him from the stall, and carried him by a covered passage to the house where Robert Olivetan was tutor. There they hid him in a secret corner. The magistrates dispersed the crowd, and sought in vain for the preacher. They then returned to report to the town council that he had suddenly vanished.

I have given you, in few words, an account of this New Year’s sermon. It was, as you have seen, a sermon preached openly and directly against the priests of Rome. It was not simply the preaching of the gospel of Christ. In fact it was not the preaching of the gospel at all, except that Christ was mentioned in it in a sentence here and there as the Saviour and Redeemer.

Ought it to have been otherwise? Ought Anthony to have preached the glad tidings of salvation only, and avoided giving offence to the priests, by holding them up as the Pharisees of Christendom?



It would be easy to pass judgment upon Anthony Froment in words which sound wise, and kind, and good: yet such words might, in the ears of God, be foolish, unkind, and evil “Who are we that we should “judge another man’s servant?” Have we any right to say that Anthony was not delivering the message which God put into his mouth? The same gracious Saviour who spoke in the 15th chapter of Luke, spoke also in the 2nd chapter of Matthew. For more than a thousand years, as Anthony said, had God looked down upon the apostate church. He had seen the blind led by the blind, and His blessed Word taken from His people. Dare we to say that the God who commanded Ezekiel to prophecy against the shepherds of Israel—that the Christ who preached openly to the multitudes of the sins of the Pharisees, did not also send His message against the priests of Rome, by the mouth of the young schoolmaster, that New Year’s day?

It was not Christ who set the example of that course, now so commonly recommended, of trusting that truth will displace false teaching, without our venturing to say of any that they are wrong. The people of Geneva, in any case, had the matter put plainly before them, and could no more complain of the hardship of being fairly warned against the priests, than a sick man could complain, if warned that his doctor was giving him poison instead of medicine.

The priests were not willing that the matter should end by the disappearance of Anthony. They prowled about the streets, and before the day was over they had assured themselves of the fact that Anthony was somewhere in Chautemps’ house. They therefore collected in a crowd under the windows, shouting and threatening. Chautemps led Anthony out of the back door, in the dark, and took him to the house of the resolute Perrin, who had defied the priests the day before. But the priests soon found out what

had happened. They rushed to Perrin's house, and shouted loudly that they would set it on fire, and burn all who were in it. But Perrin, who was a match for them, went to the door, and said, "I am free to keep an honest servant in my house without asking your leave, and I shall do so."

He then turned to Anthony, and said, "You are my servant--I herewith engage you." At the same moment a body of Huguenots appeared in the street, and the priests fled.

During the few days that followed, the magistrates and the priests consulted together as to what should be done next. Had not some of the magistrates been Huguenots, things might have been speedily settled. But the town was divided, and so equally divided, it was impossible to decide between the two parties.

Meanwhile Anthony worked for his master, Perrin, being employed in weaving ribbon. He went out sometimes to visit those who had been converted by the preaching. Every now and then he was insulted and abused, but as some of his friends always followed him, armed with stout sticks, no one dared to touch him.

One day he met a procession on the Rhone bridge. The priests carried crosses and relics, and chanted prayers to Peter and Paul. Anthony stood upright, and did not bow to the images. The priests left off chanting, and shouted, "Fall, on the dog! Drown him!" The women, always the most zealous, rushed upon him and endeavoured to push him into the river. But his friends with their sticks ran to the rescue, seized Anthony, and dragged him into the house of our friend, Claudine Levet, which was at the corner of the bridge.

Aimé, Claudine's husband, was an apothecary, and the lower part of the house was his shop. The priests led on the people to the attack. They flung

stones through the windows, threw mud into the shop, and at last rushed in, and shattered the bottles, and scattered the drugs over the floor. The Huguenots put Anthony in a secret chamber, and then, armed with their sticks, drove priests, women, and all the mob speedily from the bridge. At night, Anthony returned to his master, Perrin, and told him he felt that the time was come for him to leave Geneva. His Huguenot friends were grieved, but they said he was right—it was no longer safe for him to remain there. Setting out in the dark, he left the city, and found his way back to his peaceful little home at Yvonand.

## Chapter 51

### THE WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

**T**he priests had triumphed! They had got rid of Farel— and now, three months later, of Anthony Froment. And in the place of Froment, they had the Grey Friar. Crowds had gone to his preaching during Advent, and they might expect the same now. Crowds did go. But to the consternation of the priests, the Grey Friar himself preached boldly to the people, just the same blessed gospel which Anthony had preached at the Golden Cross. The light which God had kindled in Geneva was not extinguished. A ray of that light had reached the heart of the poor friar, and he was not ashamed to confess Christ as his Saviour. Even during Advent, whilst he had been preaching the misty sermons I described to you, his heart had been drawn to the gossellers. But the gospel was not then clear to him: he had “seen men as trees walking”; now he saw clearly, and stood up in the pulpit of his church to tell what he had seen—Christ, not in the wafer, but in the glory.

The priests were more enraged against the friar than they had been against Froment. With the help of the government of Friburg, they persuaded the council to banish him from the city.

Thus three of the Lord's servants, one after another, had been driven from Geneva. But when God has set the door open, no man can shut it. The preachers were gone, but they left behind them a multitude, to whom their words had been the message of life. There were men, women, and little children, whom Christ had called by name, whom He had led out of the ruin and the evil, to the green pastures where He feeds His flock. "The Lord added to the church daily such as were saved." And further we read, "those who believed were together." They had their preachers no longer, but they had the Word of God. And they met in many houses, especially in the house of Baudichon, to read, and pray, and worship God.

Baudichon was now something more than a Huguenot. He had given his heart to Christ. He had still much to learn, and had not lost all his old faith in stout hearts and good swords. But as far as his light went, he was a true, honest, God-fearing man, and he loved Christ very sincerely, and delighted in hearing the gospel. He was glad that his house should be a meeting-place for all who loved the Lord. He was always ready to stand up for the truth—sometimes in a rough and blundering way, it is true, but it is often a long while before we learn that the weapons of the flesh, are a hindrance rather than a help, and Baudichon was like us all in this matter. It would be well if we were all like him in courage and faithfulness.

It was singular that the motto of Baudichon's family was this: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it" How many had there been for more than a thousand years thus labouring in vain to build the house of God! But God Himself was building now.

We have an account given us of these meetings, and, as we read it, our thoughts go back to Troas in the days of Paul the tentmaker. "They arrived, they greeted one another with brotherly affection; they sat down in the large

room, and remained a few moments in silence. They knew that though they were many, they had all one only Saviour, present in the midst of them, although unseen. Then one of them would read a portion of Scripture, another explained and applied it, and a third prayed. The believers departed edified from their meetings, which were so different, they said, from the pope's mass."

Sometimes a Swiss or French gospeller, passing through Geneva, would preach on his way, then all the believers would flock to hear him, but it was not often they had such an opportunity. Generally speaking their teacher was Guérin, the cap-maker, who was much esteemed amongst them, and who helped them greatly. They were very happy in these little meetings for reading and prayer; but they read in the Scriptures that the Lord Jesus had also desired those who love Him to meet around His table, "to remember His death till He come." They spoke therefore to one another about this. Could they not meet to break bread as He had commanded?

Thus did God the Spirit lead them on to that great act of worship, which marks the fellowship of the saints of God. "When they met together," we are told, "in some humble room, they spoke of the happiness they should feel if they could gather round the Lord's table to remember His death." But where should they meet? It was needful to think of some safe place: for if the preaching had roused the priests to fury, the "breaking of bread" would be to them a far more awful crime. It was an act which declared to all that the mass was an evil thing—that there was no altar, no sacrifice, no priest—that all who were washed in the precious blood of Christ were alike near to God—"so nigh that they could not nearer be." And thus, without a priest, save the Great High Priest in Heaven, without an altar, without "consecrated bread," without a service-book, they could enter into the Holiest, and

worship the Father in spirit and in truth. All alike, worshippers once purged—all alike, a holy priesthood—all alike, fitted to “offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

They would have gladly had amongst them William Farel and Anthony Froment—they would have welcomed them as beloved teachers, but not as priests: and, as you know, Farel and Froment were just as much laymen as Guérin or Baudichon.

“But do we not read of ministers in the New Testament?” you may say. We do, indeed, read much of ministers. And I would have you to observe that one great difference between the gossellers, and the Catholics of Geneva was just this—the gossellers owned the ministers whom God sent amongst them; the Catholics drove them away, because, for one reason, they were not priests. May the Lord preserve those who read this history from the same sin—or save them from it, if in their case it is growing up amongst the weeds of the natural heart. When Christ went up on high He gave gifts to men. “He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” He gives apostles and prophets no more. We need no more inspired teachers, because the inspired Word is completed, and there is nothing to add to it. In other words, the New Testament is to us what the apostles and prophets were to the first believers. But Christ, in His grace, has not ceased to send evangelists, pastors, and teachers. He had been sending them to Geneva, in the persons of William Farel, Anthony Froment, and the Grey Friar. Some rejected them, and owned the priests whom man had made. Some received them, and praised the Lord for His blessed gift. Which of these were owning the ministers of God?

As regards the Lord's Supper, it is true the gossellers believed that, without a minister at all, they could meet together to break bread and to worship God. Not only without a priest, but without a minister also. Were they wrong in so doing?

To answer you this question I would refer you to an infallible teacher—the New Testament—which is the Word of God Himself. If there is any reason to think they were wrong, you will find the reason there; and if you do not find it there, it will be because there is no such reason. The Word of God is plain and simple to all who desire to know His mind, and to do His will. And if the Lord's Supper needs the presence of a priest or minister, you will find that God has said so.

Let us now go back to the gossellers of Geneva. The place was chosen for the first breaking of bread. It was a little walled garden near the city gates. The time fixed upon was very early on a March morning. Benches were placed around the table, on which were set the bread and wine. They sat down in silence. Just at that moment the sun arose, and lighted up the peaks of the snowy mountains, above which the morning-star was shining. Guérin, the cap-maker, stood up and prayed. He then broke the bread, and passed it round. He then passed round the wine. Then together they praised the Lord, and went home filled with joy.

The priests heard of this meeting. They told Sister Jane the Lutheran dogs had met together to eat bread and cheese, which they called the Lord's Supper. They consulted together what next to do. They determined to get rid of Guérin, and the shortest way was to kill him. But Guérin was warned of the plot. He escaped from Geneva, and took refuge with Anthony Froment at Yvonand. Thus had a fourth witness for Christ been driven from the city.



But the priests had not got rid of the gospel in getting rid of the cap-maker. "Day by day," we are told," the gossellers met in houses or gardens to pray to God, to sing hymns, and to explain holy Scripture. And the people began to dispute with the priests, in their houses, and publicly." If a meeting was put down in one house, it was held in another. The priests said," They could find no remedy against this plague."

In the midst of their despair help arrived. A Dominican monk came to Geneva, to preach the Lent sermons in the place of the banished friar. "He is a true Catholic," said the priests, "just the opposite of the one that is gone." The monk was pleased at the thought of putting down the heresy, and proud that he should be thus chosen for the work. He prepared, we are told, "a fine discourse," which he was to preach in the church of St. Dominic. He began his sermon by warning all men against the Bible. He then proceeded to abuse the gossellers, and to glorify the pope. He poured forth all that came into his head: "for," he said, "I will so blacken the heretics, that they shall never be washed clean."

The Huguenots had gone to listen. They became more and more excited as the sermon went on. "If one of us dares to move his lips," they said to one another, "our masters bawl out like madmen, but those friars are allowed to pour out their poison and infect the world, and nobody stops them."

As the monk said his last word, a man sprang up on a bench, and said, in a loud voice, "Master, I desire to show you honestly from Scripture wherein you have erred." The priests looked round in astonishment. "What! a layman to teach the church!" they said, and in a moment they rushed upon the man, who was a servant of our friend Guérin, named Peter Fédy. They abused him, pushed him off the bench, and would have killed him with their

blows, but Chautemps, Claude Bernard, and others, carried him off in safety.

The priests ran for help to the council, who banished Fédy without a hearing. Every one lamented his loss. Thus was a fifth of the Lord's servants sent into exile.

## *Chapter 52*

### THE PRIESTS' RIOT

**B**ut the priests had learnt, by sad experience, not to be too sure of victory when they had got rid of one of their enemies. Another might spring up at any moment, and they could only hope for a quiet life if they could kill or banish, not five or six, but the whole multitude of gossellers.

Some of the Huguenots suspected that mischief was brewing. Two of them, Baudichon and Claude Salomon, consulted together, and agreed that it would be best to ask for the protection of Berne. Claude wished to propose this to some of the councillors who were on the side of the gospel, but Baudichon said, "No, we had better do the business alone, without asking anybody's advice. We will go ourselves to Berne and tell our own tale." Two magistrates, however, found out this plan. They fully approved of it, for they were Huguenots—one of them was Claude Bernard. But they said that Baudichon and Salomon would be running a terrible risk, for they would bring down upon their heads the bitter anger of all the Catholics. "But if you will go," they said, "do whatsoever God shall inspire you to do. We give you no directions."

The two Huguenots set off at once, and soon a letter arrived from Berne to the council of Geneva, which startled the councillors greatly. Some were angry, some frightened, some rejoiced. The Bernese wrote, in fact, a tremendous letter. They reproached the council for the persecution of Farel, and of the other preachers, and said, "We are surprised that in your city the faith in Jesus Christ, and those who hold it, are so ill-treated." The council was divided; they none of them knew what to do. "If we yield to Berne," they said, "we shall have the priests raising a riot. If we please the priests we shall lose the protection of Berne, and the Huguenots will rise in rebellion, having Berne at their back."

Baudichon and Salomon were soon found out to have been the cause of this letter. Nearly all the councillors were enraged against them. The news spread through the town that Berne had interfered, and had required full liberty for the gospel.

I cannot, in this little history, tell you all that followed. You can imagine how the priests called for vengeance upon the two wicked Huguenots. They said to one another the time was come to take the matter into their own hands. On the Thursday night before "holy week," they all collected in the same great hall where Farel had endured the spitting, and the blows of the canons. Most of the priests came to this meeting armed to the teeth, and "breathing threatening and slaughter." The hall was lighted by torches, held by monks. The consultation began. What was to be done to stop the plague of heresy? "We will not lower ourselves to dispute with the heretics," they said. "We will not ask help from the magistrates: they are only lukewarm. We must conquer the gossellers by ourselves. Then we will have the bishop back, and the good old times with him. We will ring the alarm bell forthwith, draw our swords, and call out the faithful to march against these

dogs! Let us kill all the gossellers, without sparing one. We shall be doing God a good service.”

Thus was the matter settled. As for the crime of murder, what did it matter? The bishop had already sent pardons in blank, to be filled up for any whose consciences were tender — pardons for the murders they were going to commit by the hundred, if they needed pardons, and were not, as most of them were, proud of their zeal for God.

The next day the streets of Geneva were to run down with blood.

At the head of the priests was a gigantic canon, called Peter Wernli. He was armed from head to foot, and was prepared to hew down his enemies with the strength of a Samson. It was settled that all the Catholic army was to be gathered in and around the cathedral early next morning. From that point they were to start upon their awful errand. I have not space to tell you how all this is related to us in the old chronicles, and in the journal of Sister Jane. She looked upon the priests as heroes, going forth to fight with the enemies of God. David, with his sling and stone, was scarcely as great in her eyes as the canon, Peter Wernli.

Next morning, as they gathered in the cathedral, two Huguenots peeped in. The bishop’s secretary, wishing to be first in the fight, threw down one of them, and stabbed him in the back. A cry of horror rang through the cathedral— not because a harmless young man had been stabbed, but because the holy floor had been defiled by the blood of a heretic.

“Therefore,” writes Sister Jane, “there was no bell rung, and no service performed in the cathedral till it had been purified by my lord the vicar; nor was service performed in the other churches either, because the mother-church was closed. Nor did they ring the bells, even in the convents, for the same cause.”

Such is the sense of sin in the natural heart of man! These blind priests, who were setting out on the awful work of murdering all the people of God in their city, were filled with grief and horror at what they called the sin of sacrilege.

You and I, unless God has opened our eyes, are just as fit to judge of sin against God, as these benighted priests of Geneva. It is only when we “have the mind of Christ” that we can even confess our sins aright: for, otherwise, we are utterly in the dark as to what they are. We see these men full of grief for the insult rendered to a stone building, whilst they were going forth to destroy the true and living temples in which the Holy Ghost dwelt. It is not that the natural man has no conscience, or a conscience that does not act, but his conscience is no guide to him. It is like a clock that is wound up, but not set. Were he to compare it with the sundial—the Word of God—he would make some terrible discoveries! And the sooner they are made the better.

But notwithstanding the lamentations of the priests over the stained pavement, “the good Christians,” says Sister Jane —meaning the Catholics —” were more animated to the fight than before.” They would have started at once, but the magistrates, who had arrived, made a last effort to prevent the riot. Finding the priests utterly unmanageable, they thought of a plan for delaying the massacre. “You will kill the good Catholics, without knowing which are which,” they said; and, ordering the cathedral doors to be closed to prevent the march, they sent for a bundle of laurels, and proposed that every Catholic should stick a leaf in his cap before the fighting began.

“Then,” says Sister Jane, “my lords, the churchmen (that is, the priests), went to prostrate themselves before the high altar with much devotion, and all the company commended themselves to God, singing, with many tears,

the hymn, 'The banners of the King go forth.' They then commended themselves to the glorious Virgin Mary, and sang to her the hymn, 'Salve Regina'; and they then encouraged one another by saying, 'Today' (Friday) is the day our Saviour shed His blood, and it is meet and right to shed ours in taking vengeance on His enemies, who crucify Him more cruelly than the Jews.'" Then the great alarm-bell was rung, and the army set forth with crosses and banners.

Three other bands were to join them in the Molard. The magistrates went with the army. They hoped to find some means of making a further delay. As the other bands had not arrived at the Molard, they insisted that no fighting should begin till all were assembled.

In the meanwhile, the Huguenots had gathered in and around Baudichon's house. They foresaw that would be the first point of attack. The Huguenot women met to pray; and Sister Jane and her nuns, too, spent the day in prayer for "the good fathers "who were "gone to battle for the faith." The abbess made a cross of ashes on the foreheads of the poor ladies; they then "made processions round the cloisters, saying holy litanies, and imploring the intercession of all the court of Heaven, the glorious Virgin Mary, and all the glorious saints, and all with many tears and great devotion."

The Catholic women, too, won high praise from Sister Jane. She tells us that, as their husbands were going to kill the heretic men, they said to one another, "Let us go, too, and make war against the heretic women, that we may get rid of the whole race." And the children, too, "were well resolved to render good service with their mothers. There were at least seven hundred children, from twelve to fifteen years of age, who carried little swords and hatchets, and filled with stones their hats and caps and skins, that they, too, might slaughter the heretic children. The women carried

stones in their aprons.” One of them did not take up arms— her father was a gospeller, but her husband was what Sister Jane calls “a Christian.” The poor woman, seeing her husband start for the fight, began to cry; but her husband said to her, “Woman, cry as much as you please; if I meet your father he shall be the first person I shall try my strength upon. He shall kill me, or I shall kill him.”

Such were the heroes of Sister Jane. The poor young wife was Baudichon’s daughter.

The priests were as proud of the fighting women as Sister Jane was. They were burning with impatience to begin the attack. But still the other bands did not arrive. Bye-and-bye a report reached the Molard that one band, in crossing the Rhone Bridge, had been driven back by a magistrate with an armed force. This was true; it was a band headed by a furious butcher. The magistrate who defeated them had closed the gates of the bridge. This was the same bridge near which Aimé Levet had his shop of drugs. Our friend Claudine, hearing a strange noise, ran out of the house to find out what was going on. Some Catholic women rushed upon her, shrieking loudly, “Let us begin the war! We will throw this dog into the Rhone!” But Claudine being “tricky,” as Sister Jane describes it, ran back quickly into the house and shut the door. The women vainly endeavoured to break the door to pieces. Finding this was beyond their strength, they vented their fury upon Aimé Levet’s shop-window. A second time his bottles were shattered, his shop ransacked, and his drugs thrown into the street. But Claudine remained calm and bright in the raging storm. We are told,” she raised her thoughts to Heaven, where she found great matter of joy to blot out all her sorrows.”

Still the priests and their army waited impatiently in the Molard. One of the three bands had arrived, bringing the city banner, which was planted, by



order of the chief magistrate, in the midst of the armed priests. The magistrate, like Pilate, not being able to control the priests, thought it best to let it seem they were acting by his consent. One band had, as you know, been defeated on the bridge; but the third, which consisted chiefly of priests, was still expected. The news came at last that this third band was marching round by way of Baudichon's house. The Canon Veigy, who was at the head of it, had heard that all the Huguenots were gathered in the house of their leader, and a fine plan occurred to him. Could he but set fire to the house, and surround it with his troops to prevent any from escaping, all the Huguenots might be burnt at once! That would be a bonfire worth seeing! But Canon Veigy had scarcely started when he met some terrified Catholics, who came running to tell him of the disaster on the bridge.

The canon did not wish to share the fate of the butcher, by having to pass near the spot where the Huguenot magistrate was still holding his ground. He, therefore, went straight to the Molard.

When his friends in the Molard found he had not burnt the house, they were "greatly astonished and vexed," They called him a coward and a traitor. The tidings spread to the Huguenot party that the priests were clamouring to have the fire lighted at once. Baudichon and his friends had desired as much as possible to avoid bloodshed. They now determined to march forth in dependence upon God. They resolved not to strike a blow unless they were attacked, but to show themselves face to face with their enemies.

They went in silence to the Molard, and there drew up in line of battle on two sides of the square. They were but few, but they knew God was on their side. They said to one another, "There is not a spark of help for us but in God alone."

The cannon were loaded; the Catholics seized their weapons; the women and children came forward with their stones, and there was a general shout of threats and insults, which rose from all parts of the Catholic army. The Huguenot women remained in the house, and prayed. All was now ready for the onset.

But God had determined that the blood of His saints should not be shed that day. At that last moment some merchants from Friburg, who had come to the fair, arrived in the Molard. They were astonished and grieved at the sight of the citizens thus armed against one another. They spoke to the Huguenots, and warned them that, if the fight began, they would have no chance against such numbers. The Huguenots replied they had no wish to fight; they wished only to be left in peace.

The merchants then turned to the priests. They told them it was disgraceful that they should thus be stirring up the people to murder one another. But the priests were the more furious at this interference. The merchants found it was useless to try to bring them to reason. They, therefore, turned lastly to the magistrates, and reminded them it was their duty to stop the riot and prevent bloodshed. The magistrates were glad of any pretext for doing so. But how could they hinder the priests, who were too strong for them?

The worthy merchants then called to the people on the Catholic side. They asked them if they really wished to murder their friends and relations with their own hands. "Why don't you let the priests fight it out by themselves?" they said. The people thought the merchants were right "After all, why should we get killed for the priests?" they said one to another. "We have been fools to let them lead us to fight in their quarrel against our neighbours." And thus from all quarters a cry arose, "Let us make peace!"

The magistrates seized the opportunity. Everyone was commanded to go quietly home, under pain of being hanged. And thus the crowd dispersed. All went home with joy and thankfulness, except the priests only, and the few who were like them. Amongst that few was one who had not appeared on the Molard, namely, Sister Jane. She wrote in her journal that “that was a bad day for the Christians, and it much grieved them that all men were sent home without fighting. They said one to another, ‘We ought at this time to finish the work, and then we should have no more fear of the Lutherans, nor any trouble more.’ And, in truth, it would have been better so than to let them live.”

Thus did this poor woman thirst for the blood of the saints, imagining herself to be one set apart for God, holier in His sight than almost any other. If you never before realised that your natural heart is stone-blind as to the things of God, you see in one of the same race, one of your own flesh and blood, what that blindness is, and what, alas! is that hatred to all that God loves, which fills the heart of every unsaved sinner. You would get no credit in this country and in these days by expressing that hatred in the same way, and perhaps you are, therefore, little aware that it exists in your heart at all. But Sister Jane was but a branch of the same stock from which we all came—you and I, and the priests of Geneva also.

## *Chapter 53*

### NEWS OF WILLIAM FAREL

**T**he day following, the council of Geneva published some decrees, which were read aloud in the streets. They were meant to satisfy both parties, and to some extent they did so; but the Catholics, though they considered that on the whole they had gained a victory, were ill at ease amongst the Huguenots. The priests wore arms, saying they were afraid of an attack. The Huguenots continued their meetings, and again broke bread in the garden.

At last two Catholic magistrates, Du Crest and Roy, determined to make a last effort to put down the gossellers. They set off secretly for Berne to entreat the council of Berne to do nothing more to help forward the gospel in Geneva. When they arrived at Berne, what was their consternation to see, standing in the street, their old enemies, Baudichon and Salomon! They could scarcely believe their eyes. Du Crest was furious. "What are you doing here?" he asked, rudely and angrily. "We are told you are come to speak against us," said Baudichon. "We are here to defend ourselves."

The next day Du Crest and Roy went to the council. Scarcely had they taken their seats, when the two Huguenots walked in, and coolly sat down by them, and, before Du Crest could say a word, Baudichon rose up and addressed the council. He told the Bernese how there were hundreds in Geneva who were hungering and thirsting for the gospel-how the magistrates hindered and opposed it, and would willingly get rid of all who listened to it, as well as of those who preached it. He told the tale of the plot for murdering all the gossellers. He especially accused Du Crest of having taken part with the priests, and, lastly, he entreated the Bernese not only to defend the cause of the gospel, but to see that he and Salomon were allowed to go home and live in peace.

The council asked Du Crest what answer he had to make to the accusations of the Huguenot. Du Crest and Roy both replied they had nothing to say. Terrified and angry, they returned to Geneva.

The Huguenots returned there also. This was in the month of April.

You may wish to know where William Farel was all this time. We hear of him during the spring of 1533 at Morat, not far from Berne. There, and in the country round, he was hard at work, teaching and preaching. "If my father were alive," he said, "I know not how I should find time to write him a letter." He could, however, write letters, when it was needful to do so, to make known the truth the Lord had taught him. We find a letter written by him during that month of March to his friend Berthold Haller. It was again on the question of the law. Is the Christian under the law, or not? A part of this letter may be useful: —

"... I should have made good my promise before now, my thrice dearest Berthold, if leisure had been given me—I will not say to clear up some points, but to express simply and plainly whatever occupies my thoughts as

to those matters which we lately talked over. Put a good construction on whatever is sent in haste. You will admonish me in a candid and brotherly spirit wherever I swerve from the straight line of Scripture.

“First, I believe that the law and the prophets are divine oracles, the Word of the Lord, which holy men, acted on by the divine Spirit, have uttered, and that they are all so fixed and firm, that Heaven and earth, and whatever exists, will dissolve and perish rather than that one atom of all that is in the sacred Word fall away, or fail of its fulfilment.

“God, when He has spoken, changes not His purpose, and knows no change. However, we confess that the whole array of ceremonies, justifications of the flesh, oblations and sacrifices, have vanished; that the priesthood has been transferred; and that we are not now subject to the law graven on stone, since formerly we Gentiles were never subject to one of those laws, for the circumcised alone were debtors to do the law.

“When the carnal man hears these things, he thinks them contradictory to one another, while in reality they marvelously agree together. Thus, no one says that the blade perishes which becomes the ear, nor the flower to which the fruit succeeds. In the same way, the circumcision of the heart takes the place of the circumcision of the flesh. Christ, the Prophet and Priest, takes the place of Moses, the prophet, and Aaron, the priest. The sacrifice of Christ, cleansing the heart and purging the conscience, takes the place of the sacrifices of beasts slaughtered for sins of negligence or ignorance; and the church, holy, perfect, and complete in Christ and His members, takes the place of the tabernacle, the ark, and the rest of that which Moses made.”

He adds that now eternal death takes the place of death by stoning, such as the law commanded for those who refused to obey, but that, at the same time, “pestilent persons who refuse to hear Christ should be punished even

here by the sword.” We know that, even before the law, God commanded, with regard to murderers, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” And He has said of magistrates, that they “bear not the sword in vain.” Yet it would seem that there was a further thought in the mind of Farel, not very clearly expressed, that it was the duty of the church thus to punish, or, in any case, to take a share in punishing, not murderers only, but others who, as he says, “refuse to hear Christ” From this mistaken thought trouble and sorrow were to spring in days to come. We must not wonder to find that all the dark mists of error were not entirely passed away from his soul. At the same time we see the light gleaming through the confusion, and in the words that follow, we find the dawning at least, of the perfect day, the unclouded light, into which, by the Spirit, we are brought.

“It is concerning the Ten Commandments,” he says, “that there is the dispute: for some hold that they are abrogated, and some, on the contrary, that they are all the more confirmed—although, when the Sabbath is treated of, they are compelled to acknowledge that they are not bound to observe it.”

Farel does not mean here that we are under no obligation to observe the Lord’s Day. But the Lord’s Day and the Sabbath are two different things. If I observe the first day of the week, in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ, I cannot truthfully say that I am thereby keeping the commandment which orders the observance of the seventh day of the week, in remembrance of the rest of God from the works which He had made.

He goes on to describe how the law was given to Moses, with “noise and flame, smoke and lightning. Moses comes down, and speaks, with a veil on his face, and brings the Ten Commandments on tables into the ark. Now, see how different is everything in Christ and in His own—how a spiritual

law is given to us—for we have not received the spirit of bondage to fear, but the adoption of sons, whereby we call on the Father, and have access to Him, through Christ, who is not veiled as Moses was, but with unveiled face reveals the treasures of God’s goodness—mercy and grace, and the exceeding great love of the Father, which casts out fear.

“For we are no longer called servants, but sons, brothers, and friends. The law is written on our hearts—not on tables of stone in the ark of the covenant, but on our minds and consciences, which God possesses and inhabits. The terrible sight of the mount does not now terrify us, lest we should seek after, invent, and serve other gods, but we hear of the love which the Father has bestowed upon us—the Father who pitied us, and gave His only Son—the Son so dear to Him. We hear how He entreats us lovingly to come to Him—how the Son so loved us, that He died in order that we might live.” And, hearing this, who will not say, ‘Lord, we know no other Father or God beside Thee, nor do we seek or wish to have another, for when we were enemies Thou didst reconcile us to Thee by the death of Thy Son. How shall the reconciled implore any other help than Thine! Who having tasted of the good word of Christ will not say forthwith, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!’ When once we know Christ, He so delights our hearts, that all things are counted as dross compared with Him; for Him a man will cheerfully cast all things else away—renounce and forsake all besides.

“Oh! that the Lord would more fully impart a sense of these things, that we might not only profess them with our lips, but feel them in our heart. It is the love of Christ that constrains us to the true worship of God. Burning with this love, and loving the Father, we worship in spirit and in truth. Those who love Him thus, do not take His holy name in vain—resting from



their labours, they praise the Lord in the assembly—they cannot but love their neighbour, after the example of Christ They love those who wrong them, who return evil for good—and much more those who have deserved well of them, their parents, and their rulers. In short, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost brings forth in us the fruits of righteousness to the praise of God.”

Thus writing, speaking, teaching, and preaching of that love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, did William Farel continue his blessed work, and meanwhile many were the prayers for Geneva which he offered up to God. Let us now return to the city where the great battle between light and darkness was still raging, and was still to rage for many a day to come.

## *Chapter 54*

### THE FEAST OF THE HOLY WINDING-SHEET

**O**n the 4th of May the priests determined to make a great display of their power. That day was the feast of the Holy Winding-sheet. If you had wished to know what was the holy winding-sheet, the priests would tell you as follows: —When the Lord Jesus was buried, the print of His face remained upon the linen cloth in which He was wrapped, and now, fifteen hundred years later, was still there. Moreover, this winding-sheet had by some means found its way to Geneva, and was shown once a year with great pomp.

The stout canon, Peter Wernli, was to perform the service. He dressed himself in his finest robes, and sang loudly, to the great admiration of the Catholics. Meanwhile his thoughts were far away from the sepulchre in Judea, and from the Saviour who was laid in it. He had scarcely finished the service, when he hurried off to the vicar's house—that house, where twice before the priests had met in council. This time they were again met to form a fresh plan for murdering all the Huguenots. Meanwhile some of the Catholics had gone down to the Molard, and were stirring up any they could

find to attack the Huguenots at once. Several times the Huguenots who were passing by were challenged to fight. But they desired peace, and refused to strike a blow.

At last, our hotheaded friend, Ami Perrin, being attacked by a Catholic, rushed upon him, and nearly killed him. Some Catholics ran straightway to the vicar's house, shouting loudly, "Help! help! they are killing all good Christians!"

Peter Wernli sprang to his feet. He armed himself on the spot, seized his sword and halberd, which he had brought with him, and, "burning with the love of God," as Sister Jane describes it, he called to the priests to follow him to the Molard. "And this good knight," says Sister Jane, "being very expert, was armed at once, and, not having patience to wait for the other gentlemen of the church, he went out first in his ardent courage, and ran to the Molard, where he thought to find the Christians gathered. And he cried in his fervour, 'Courage, good Christians, do not spare those rascals!' But, alas! he found himself amongst his enemies."

The truth was, that a riotous crowd was now gathered in the Molard. The night was dark. Shouts and threats were heard on every side, and Peter Wernli knew not whom to attack. He stood in the square, swearing coarse oaths in his stentorian voice, and at last succeeded in urging on some of the Catholics to fight.

Wernli could not see where his enemies were, and knew not in which direction to strike. He therefore dealt his blows to right and left, till a Huguenot snatched his halberd, and broke it in pieces. The canon then drew his two-handed sword, and flew upon the Huguenots around. He was so well defended by his heavy armour that no blow could touch him.

As he was thus hewing down his enemies, a poor carman came up, and determined to put an end to the fight. He looked for a weak point in the priest's armour, thrust in his sword, and Peter Wernli, having staggered to the entrance of a house, fell dead upon the stairs. The house was that of Chautemps.

"He died," says Sister Jane, "a blessed martyr!"

"All night long," she adds, "the Christians were under arms, seeking those wicked dogs, but it was of no good—they were all hidden."

When daylight came the priests went wearied to bed, and did not know till the morning was far advanced that Peter Wernli was killed.

I will not tell you all that Sister Jane relates of his pompous funeral, and of the miracle performed there—how the dead canon stood upright in his coffin, and was quite warm and fresh-looking, five days after his burial.

What was of more importance to the Huguenots was a really strange event which happened a few weeks later.

Peter Wernli had belonged to a family at Friburg. The city of Friburg had called upon the council of Geneva to avenge the death of their old townsman. As the council had not been able to convict anyone of the murder of Peter, nobody had been punished for it. And now the council of Friburg, backed by the priests of Geneva, turned to their runaway bishop, who was at this time at his castle in France, where he had been "enjoying himself," he said, having his pinks and gillyflowers, and being "much better fed than at Geneva." But the Friburgers and the priests insisted upon his return to his forsaken diocese. They looked to the bishop as the last hope of saving the cause of the tottering church.

And thus Peter de la Baume was dragged forth from his pleasant French home, and the priests of Geneva prepared to give him a warm welcome,

making the murder of Peter Wernli the pretext for his return. The bishop, they said, should see that justice was done upon the murderers. But the bishop and the priests, and the Friburgers also, were but too glad of this pretext for quenching the gospel, and ridding Geneva of the gossellers as best they might.

On the 1st of July, with great pomp and splendour, the bishop rode into the city. On the 3rd of July the work began. This work of murder, of tyranny, of cruelty, and of enmity to God, was to be done in His holy name. And, therefore, on Thursday, July 3rd, a grand procession took place through the devoted city. The priests and monks walked in order, chanting litanies and prayers. The prayers were offered up to God, and to the Virgin, beseeching them to preserve the Holy Roman Catholic church.

The town council was then called together. The bishop rose up, and asked the assembled magistrates and people whether they owned him for their prince and lord. If they said no, they would declare themselves as rebels. But they well knew if they said yes, it was all up with their liberty— more than that, there would be an end to the gospel in Geneva.

They replied that they owned the bishop as their prince, due regard being given to their ancient laws and liberties.

“Then,” says Sister Jane, “the prelate, for the good of their souls, gave them a devout exhortation, firstly, that they should have the fear of God— secondly, that they should obey the holy church, the spouse of Jesus Christ”

Meanwhile the magistrates bethought themselves how their freedom was to be preserved to them. They were aware that the bishop meant to take into his own hands the affair of Peter Wernli’s murder. And the ancient laws of Geneva had given to the magistrates alone the power to judge criminal cases.

Scarcely had the bishop's oration ended than they sent some of their number to a vaulted chamber, where the old parchments and charters of their liberty had been preserved. They looked out the most important of these ancient rolls, and carried them forthwith to the bishop's palace, whither he had returned. There they spread them before him, and pointed out to him their rights and privileges, which they said were theirs still, and should always be theirs.

The bishop looked with scorn and disgust at these unwelcome parchments. He gave no answer to their remarks; but he was now determined to make no further attempt to put on an appearance of gentleness and kindness. He saw that what was to be done must be done by main force, without any show of carrying out the laws of Geneva. Calling together the priests, and the chief of the Catholics, he desired them at once to make a list of all the heretics and Huguenots who were to be seized as accomplices in the murder. The list was speedily made. The chief Huguenot, Baudichon, was away: he had started for Berne. But there was Chautemps, there was Aimé Levet, Claudine's husband, there was Ami Perrin, and there were seven or eight more, who might serve for the first list. Many more might follow, when these were safely lodged in the bishop's dungeons.

"How were they to be caught?" was the next question. The bishop resolved to send them a friendly invitation to his house. The next day this invitation was sent out. Some of them had suspicions, some were surprised at the bishop's amiable conduct—all were perplexed as to what it might mean. Claudine Levet and Jacquéma Chautemps entreated their husbands not to trust themselves within the bishop's door; and, taking the advice of

their wives, these two faithful men escaped from the city; the rest of the doomed party went to the palace.

Scarcely had they reached the bishop's ante-chamber, when they were loaded with heavy chains, and carried down to the dark dungeons below. There they were left, their feet fast in the stocks, their hands manacled. Jacquéma Chautemps was also seized. The reason given for her arrest was that she had been present at the death of Peter Wernli. You remember that he had fallen dead upon the stairs of Chautemp's house. Jacquéma was carried down to the damp dungeons of the bishop's palace, and shut up alone in a cell.

The next question now to decide was what was to be done with the prisoners. It was settled that they should be carried away by night in a boat to the strong castle of Gaillard, at the foot of the mountains, and there "it was to be done to them as the bishop pleased."

The bishop now found out for the first time where Baudichon was gone. He was enraged beyond measure. He ordered his officers to go in pursuit, not only of Baudichon, but of Chautemps and Levet. Meanwhile the magistrates had heard of the arrest of their fellow-citizens. They called the council together. What was to be done? Should they submit to the awful tyranny of the bishop, or should they rise at once in rebellion? Everyone seemed too much thunderstruck to decide upon anything. In the midst of their bewilderment there came a messenger from the bishop to ask them to furnish him with troops to pursue "the criminals," who had fled. This was too much. They at once refused to do anything of the sort. The bishop's officers, therefore, headed by a priest, set forth to the mountains.

They had been told Levet had gone in that direction. They had not gone far before they found him. The priest ordered him to be scourged on the

spot, and then locked up in the castle of Gaillard.

The other prisoners were not yet there.

The bishop was waiting his opportunity to remove them from his dungeons at Geneva. The council again demanded that they should be brought to trial before the judge, according to the laws of Geneva; but the bishop replied, "No, I shall judge them myself." In vain was one message after another sent to the bishop, to warn him that he was setting at defiance all the laws and customs of the city. He still only replied, "I shall judge them myself."

Greater and greater became the wrath of the magistrates. The Great Council of Sixty was called. Fresh messages were sent. The oldest magistrates and citizens went in procession to the palace, and told the bishop he was trampling upon their ancient liberties. He gave the same answer as before. And even the ambassadors, who had just arrived from Berne, advised the citizens to give in. They might for once, they said, let the bishop have his way. But the magistrates stood firm; and the Bernese said, "Such men deserve to be free."

Then the Great Council of Two Hundred was called. They decided, as before, not to yield to the bishop; and the bishop decided, as before, not to yield to them.

Meanwhile the prisoners remained in their dungeons, and strange rumours filled the town as to what the bishop meant to do with them. It was not difficult to imagine. And other dark rumours began to spread, that all round the city the soldiers of Savoy and of Friburg were gathering, ready to enter at any moment, and avenge the death of Peter Wernli.

All was dark within and without. And the prayer of Gideon went up from many a heart amongst the gossellers of Geneva: "Oh, my Lord, if the Lord



be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" And perhaps there were some amongst them who felt as though God had forsaken them in those terrible days of suspense and dread: they were a little flock, helpless and defenceless, and, unless the Lord Himself delivered them, there was no hope.

Then came the news that a gopeller had been murdered by the bishop's officers, in his harvest-field near the town. "He sees no harm in destroying men," said some of the Huguenots: "may not we destroy the images of wood and stone?" And that same day (July 12th) they carried off the image of the Virgin from the castle gate, and burnt it.

The bishop was alarmed. What might he not expect from men who would dare to lay hands on the Virgin herself? He determined to make away with his prisoners that very night. Boats were prepared and moored by the side of the lake; but a Huguenot had suspected the plot. He went to the lake-side as soon as it was dark, cut the mooring ropes, and took away the oars. Other Huguenots walked round the town carrying torches, which were simply long poles tipped with iron, and a bundle of lighted matches tied to the end. They were determined to be on the watch.

A few days before Baudichon had returned home. That day, July 12th, he had been out in the harvest-fields from the early morning. As he came home after dark, he met a party of armed men at the city gate. He asked them what was the matter. They replied the bishop was going to carry off the prisoners. A sudden thought came into Baudichon's mind. If there were some who had prayed the prayer of Gideon, they were now to see that the God of Gideon is still the God of His people. He called together fifty of his most trusty friends. He told them to take each an iron-tipped staff, with five unlighted matches at the end. He then went with them to a house near the

palace, where they remained hidden till the hour of midnight. Then Baudichon ordered his men to light their matches, to hold their staves in their left hands, their swords in their right hands, and to follow him: and thus suddenly, none daring to resist them, did they walk straight into the bishop's palace, and up to his chamber.

The bishop "stared with amazement," and trembled with fear. Baudichon spoke for the rest. "We demand the prisoners," he said. "Surrender them at once to their lawful judges."

The bishop was now completely terrified. He had already been alarmed by the sight of a comet, and this sudden apparition of armed men, with drawn swords, and with 250 lights, so bewildered and scared him that he made no resistance. He delivered up the prisoners, one and all; and without striking a blow did Baudichon carry them off in triumph, and deliver them up to the magistrates.

It was a night for which Jacquéma Chautemps would often praise the Lord—that sudden deliverance not only from a dungeon, but from the cruel death which was at hand.

And not only were the prisoners delivered from death, but, strange to say, that daring act of Baudichon had delivered Geneva forever from Peter de la Baume, and from Catholic prince-bishops from that day to this.

The poor bishop could not recover from his fright. He could not sleep; he thought his life was hanging but by a thread in the wicked Huguenot city. He told his servants he would fly at once for safety. Some Catholic magistrates, hearing the rumour, came next day, which was Sunday, to entreat him to remain. But the more the bishop thought of it, the more terrified did he feel. He gave secret orders to his servants to pack up a few needful articles. He sat up on Sunday night, and wrote a letter to the

council, commanding them to put down the gospel meetings, and to defend the holy church “tooth and nail.” Early on the morning of Monday, July 14, the news spread through the town that the bishop had fled. He had escaped in the darkness of the early morning, by a little postern door, had hurried through the silent streets, had sprung into a boat, which his servants had prepared, and having rowed to a safe distance, had mounted the horse that was waiting for him, and had galloped away, never to return.

He retired to his tower of May, and rejoiced to think he should see Geneva no more. “The Catholics,” says Sister Jane, “were sorely grieved “; and the pope blamed him for deserting his flock.

And the free citizens of Geneva say to this day, when they want to express their utter contempt, “I don’t care a Baume for you!”

The Huguenots breathed freely now that the bishop was gone. The rescued prisoners were brought to trial before the lawful judges. They were all acquitted, for there was no charge to bring against them.

The carman who had killed Peter Wernli was beheaded. The Huguenots did not consider that he had deserved to die. They said he was but acting in defence of the lives of others. It was Peter Wernli who had begun the fight, and that without any just cause; and had the carman not come to the rescue, many harmless people would probably have fallen beneath the sword of the stout priest. And the Huguenots could not but remember that it was Peter Wernli who had rushed forward to run his sword through William Farel, when he left the vicar’s house. And they believed that God also had remembered this attempted murder of His faithful servant. “Vengeance is Mine—I will repay, said the Lord.”

One victim of the bishop’s wrath was still in peril of his life. This was Aimé Levet. He was kept securely in the dungeons of the Castle Gaillard,

and the governor refused to release him. Tidings came of the insults and the cruelties heaped upon him. But it was not without a purpose that God thus left His servant in the hands of the enemy. Aimé Levet was being tried as gold in the furnace, and he was to come forth brighter than before.

As he lay in his dark dungeon, fresh beams from the glory lighted up his soul, and he resolved that, if ever the Lord led him forth again, he would make Christ known far and wide. Claudine was praying for him, and she was to have a better answer than merely his life and liberty.

Two months passed by, and then some Bernese ambassadors appeared at the Castle Gaillard, and demanded the prisoner. It would be a bold man who would dare to refuse Berne—and Aimé Levet was delivered up.

His first act was to write to Anthony Froment and entreat him to return to Geneva. Anxiously did Aimé and Claudine wait for the answer. Though the bishop was gone, they knew that it would be at the risk of his life, if Anthony again appeared at Geneva.

A few days passed, and then the most welcome answer arrived, being none other than Anthony himself! He brought a friend with him, a preacher from Paris, whose name was Alexander. At once the preaching began.

The priests wrote off to the bishop, who wrote in return forbidding the “new-fangled preaching.” But the magistrates turned a deaf ear, and commanded in their turn that the gospel should be preached. From that moment the meetings became lawful—none could hinder them.

They were held in private houses. The largest room was made ready—the preacher would stand under the high over-’ hanging chimney-piece, and when the room became too full, they would go out into the streets and markets, and crossways. In vain the priests did their best to insult and ill-

treat the preachers. The Huguenots only felt the more convinced that the men who bore these insults were the true servants of Christ.

At last, in November, came a great letter from the bishop to the Council of Two Hundred. "We command," he said, "that no one in our city of Geneva preach, expound, or cause to be preached or expounded, the holy page, the holy gospel, without our express permission, under pain of perpetual excommunication, and a fine of one hundred pounds." The letter was read to the assembled council One and all, the Two Hundred rose up, and without saying a word, left the council-room. Their indignation was too great to allow them to answer. And the preachings were held far oftener than before. Testaments and tracts were given away in numbers by Anthony and Alexander; crowds came to the preaching, and the most careless began to read the books.

The priests were in despair. At that moment they heard of a learned doctor from Paris, who was just then preaching in Savoy. They entreated him to come.

The doctor, whose name was Furbity, lost no time, and one Sunday in November, a troop of armed priests and their friends forced their way into the cathedral, where it was not usual to have preaching, and took possession of the pulpit for Furbity. To give you a small portion of one of his sermons will be better than a description of it.

"All," said Furbity, in a thundering voice, "all who read the Bible in the vulgar tongue are gluttons, drunkards, lewd persons, blasphemers, thieves, and murderers! Those who encourage them are as wicked as they, and God will punish them. All who will not obey the pope, or the cardinals, or the bishops, or the curates, or the priests, are the devil's flock. They are marked by him. They are worse than Jews, traitors, murderers, and robbers, and

ought to be hanged on the gallows. All who eat meat on Friday are worse than Turks and mad dogs. Beware of them, as you would of lepers. Have no dealings with them. Do not let them marry your daughters. You had better give them to the dogs.”

Such were the arguments of Furbity.

The Huguenots could scarcely keep their seats. But the “holy father” continued.

“A priest,” he said, “is above the Holy Virgin, for she only gave life to Jesus Christ once, whereas the priest creates Him every day, as often as he likes. If he says the words of consecration over a sack full of bread, or in a cellar full of wine, all the bread by that act is transformed, and becomes the precious body of Christ, and all the wine is changed into His blood. The Virgin never did that! Ah, the priest! You should not merely bow to him, you should kneel and fall down before him. “Where” he continued, “are the wretched Lutherans who preach the contrary?” Where are those heretics, those rascals, those wretches worse than Jews, Turks, and heathens? Where are those fine chimney-preachers? Let them come forward, and they shall be answered. Ha, ha! they will take good care not to show themselves, except at the chimney corner, for they are only brave enough to deceive poor women and fools.”

Here Furbity stopped and looked around him. And suddenly, like David before Goliath, rose up our little Anthony in the middle of the cathedral. “A wicked young boy,” says Sister Jane, “all at once stood up and said these words: ‘For the love of God, good people, listen to what I have to say: I offer my life; I am ready to go to the stake, if I do not prove to you that the words of Doctor Furbity are false.’”

And Anthony, opening his Testament, read passage after passage, and the Huguenots called out, "That is the truth; let him answer that." But Doctor Furbity sat dumb, and hid his face. The priests waited in vain for his answer. Anthony continued to read. Then the priests, drawing their swords, rushed upon him. It was the only answer they could make. "Burn him!" shouted some. "Drown him!" shouted others. But Baudichon stepped forward, his sword drawn in his hand. "I will kill the first man who touches him," he said. "If he has done wrong, the law may punish him."

The priests drew back, and some Huguenots, seizing upon Anthony, dragged him away. "You have spoilt it all," said Ami Perrin, in his ear; "now all is lost!" "All is won!" replied Anthony.

The Huguenots carried him off to Baudichon's house, and hid him in the hayloft. A Catholic magistrate speedily followed with officers and halberds. They searched the house, stuck their spears into the hay, but the hand of God was over His servant, and they went away without finding him.

"After dinner," says Sister Jane, "my lords the magistrates consulted together, and ordered that these two Mahometans (Anthony and Alexander) should be banished from the city within twenty-four hours, never to return." The officers of the city led Alexander out of the gates, followed by a large crowd. Alexander turned to them, and preached for two hours. Many, we are told, believed the gospel. As soon as it was dark that evening, Baudichon called Anthony out of the hay loft, went with him secretly out of the city to join Alexander, and then the three friends set off along the road so often trodden by Baudichon—the road to Berne.

## *Chapter 55*

### THE ARM OF FLESH AND THE ARM OF THE LORD

**Y**ou can now have some idea what sort of people were the Huguenots of Geneva; and you can understand that there was by the time the bishop left, far more real faith and light amongst them, than at the time when William Farel first came to Geneva a year before. There were many of them who had truly turned to God. At the same time you will perhaps have remarked that they had no small faith in man's power and strength. "The word of God," the "Sword of the Spirit," was not the only weapon to which they betook themselves.

If they trusted in God, they trusted perhaps equally in the protection of Berne. But, alas! we find in ourselves too much of the same trust in an arm of flesh. If we blame the Huguenots, we are at the same time condemning ourselves. And for us, as well as for them, some of the words that follow may prove to be a message from God. They are part of a letter written some time before to "the gossellers of Geneva," by William Farel.

"Grace, peace, and mercy from our Father, full of all love and mercy, by Jesus our Lord who died for us, and who now, all power being given to



Him, sits at the right hand of God His Father—He, to whom every knee shall bow. Very dear brethren, whom I love in our Lord with my whole heart, I pray our Lord to increase your faith, to give you a whole and perfect heart, which does not look at things down here, but up there; not only at the things which the eye of flesh can see before it, but at those things which the spirit and faith know to have been done and promised by our Lord.

“It has pleased our Lord to allow you to ask the help of the arm of flesh, in order that you might more easily, and with less trouble, further the preaching of the gospel. It is not a thing displeasing to God, when, entirely trusting in Him, and not in another, we use His good creatures for the purposes for which He has made them, and he has ordained some for the punishment of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well. But, as far as I understand, the Lord, when He means to do a very great work, desires that He alone should have the honour and glory. He desires to work in you, as in the good and faithful Abraham, who against hope, believed in hope, without doubting an atom of the holy promises of God. I desire, my dear brethren, that you should follow and imitate him, and then you will see the glory and the power of God.

“It is true all your enemies surround you, as enemies once surrounded the good prophet Elisha, and that the servant who did not see the help that was sent to the prophet, was terrified, and half dead with fear. But for the honour of God, my very dear friends and brethren, do not you be like that servant ‘The Lord is my help, of whom then shall I be afraid?’ If every army in the world were to come against us, let us not fear, for the Lord is with us. And if God is with us, who shall be against us? Do not look at the army of the Syrians, but the army of God, which is against the Syrians, and for us. Instead of troubling yourselves because men were not willing to make a

covenant with you” (referring most likely to some refusal of help on the part of Berne) “think of the great covenant the Lord has made in giving you His Son, and say to yourselves ‘If men are not willing to hear our request, how much worse would it be, if the King of Heaven and Earth should refuse to hear us—He who has said, ‘Whosoever is ashamed of Me before men, of him will I also be ashamed before My Father.’ What an awful word will that be for those who hear it—Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the everlasting fire! What will be the despair of those from whom He will demand the mighty sum that all creatures together could not pay! Ah! there is none but the one Saviour who could pay it—and He has paid it.

“Therefore, my brethren, if you are so much afraid of men, be more afraid of displeasing God. Look up to the good Father, and do not think of pleasing men, but of pleasing Him. And since without faith it is impossible to please Him, and faith comes by hearing, listen to the holy voice of Jesus, to His blessed Word, however much men may threaten you, or forbid you. For it is better to obey God than man. And God is more to be feared than man. And the covenant of God can never be broken, never be disturbed. He has said of His people, he that touches them, touches the apple of His eye. Therefore, my brethren, do not be ashamed of Jesus, nor of His gospel; further it, hear it, and speak of it, without minding anyone, or caring for any but God only. But speak modestly, not railing or quarrelling, but in a gentle and tender spirit, so that God may be honoured in us, and our neighbours edified; and may the grace and blessing of Jesus our Saviour be with you.”

Thus wrote William Farel. It was a word in season. Not many months before he wrote this letter, Ulric Zwingli had fallen, sword in hand, on the battle field of Cappel. He had not been contented with the armies which Elisha saw, and he had had to remember, too late, the words of warning:

“They who take the sword shall perish with the sword.” God had taught other lessons to William Farel.

## Chapter 56

### AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

Father Furbity and the priests were in great spirits when the “two Mahometans” were gone. Sunday, December 21, was the Feast of S. Thomas of Canterbury. Father Furbity preached a sermon on that day, of which Sister Jane gives us the following notes: —

“The holy father preached very faithfully, touching those dogs to the quick. He said that all who follow that cursed sect are nothing else than people given up to lust, gluttons, unclean, ambitious, murderers and thieves, led only by their sensual passions, living like beasts, without owning God or their superiors, but bent upon indulging themselves in their damnable liberty; at which words the Christians rejoiced, and after, the sermon the Captain de Pesmes, who was the leader of the good party, went with many of his band to thank the reverend father for his good discourse, saying they would defend him from all his enemies. But the reverend gentleman replied, ‘Sir Captain, I have only done my duty, and I entreat you and all good faithful Christians to make good, use of your swords, and I on my part will employ the spirit, and use my tongue to defend the truth.’”

Scarcely had these words been spoken, when, like a sudden peal of thunder, the terrible news ran through the city — “Baudichon has come back from Berne, bringing—not an army of soldiers, but the banished Alexander and William Farel!”

“What! that wretch! that devil!” exclaimed the priests; “he is come back!”

And before the day was over, the Captain de Pesmes, seeing Baudichon and Farel. In the street, put Father Ferity’s words into execution, and rushed upon them, followed by his “Christians.” But the Huguenots were on the watch, and dragged off their friends to a place of safety.

The next day Baudichon appeared before the council, and handed in a letter from the great lords of Berne.

“You drive away the preachers of the Holy Word,” said the Bernese, “you allow men to preach who blaspheme against God. We command you to arrest your preacher” (Furbity): “moreover, we ask for a place in which William Farel may preach the gospel publicly.”

The council knew not what to do. They dared not, for fear of the priests, arrest Furbity, but they placed him under a guard of soldiers, still allowing him to preach. The priests had finer services than ever before—the dresses, the music, and the shows, were beyond all “that any alive had ever beheld.” William Farel meanwhile preached in a large room to the crowds who came there.

New Year’s Day arrived, the New Year’s Day of 1534— just one year since little Anthony’s sermon on the fish-stall. A very different message was delivered that day from all the pulpits of Geneva. “In the name of my Lord of Geneva, and of his vicar”: thus sounded the awful words in every parish church, “it is ordered that no one shall preach the Word of God, either in public, or in private, and that all the books of Holy Scripture,

whether in French or in German, shall be burnt.” On that same day did Father Furbity preach his farewell sermon, and for this occasion he had composed a doggerel verse which may be thus translated—

*“I will give you a New Year’s gift—  
Those Lutheran fellows that plague you;  
May God convert them, or, if not,  
May He give them the quartan-ague.  
If any agree with what I say,  
Let him take his measures without delay.”*

Of this farewell Sister Jane writes: “He preached with great fervour and devotion, giving a beautiful New Year’s gift to men of all estates, and so politely and with such devotion did he make his farewell, that all were in tears, and he thanked them for the good fellowship and help they had rendered him, and prayed them to persevere in devotion; and having given them his blessing he took his leave.”

But Father Furbity forgot that he was still in the keeping of his guard of soldiers, and to his great surprise, he was informed that he was a prisoner, and was not permitted to leave the city.

The Bishop’s message had roused up every Huguenot of Geneva. In spite of Farel’s warning as to the weapons of the flesh, that same evening the Huguenots appeared in arms. They did not mean to attack their enemies, but, if needful, to defend their Bibles.

The Catholics had been in arms ever since the fourth Sunday in Advent. “Their reason was to prevent the gossellers from bringing “their idol,” William Farel, to preach in St Peter’s Church, a plan which had been talked of by the Huguenots.

“It was a beautiful sight,” says Sister Jane, “to see so many handsome young men burning with the love of God, ready to expose their lives to maintain the holy faith; and to these Christians there joined themselves great troops of women and children armed with stones. And I and my company of 24, who could not carry arms of steel, carried nevertheless the arms of hope and the shield of faith; and I write this, that those who have to suffer for the love of God may know that those before them have suffered also, following the example of our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ, who suffered first and most.”

I do not write these words of Sister Jane to hold her up to ridicule, but as a solemn warning. She was sincere in what she said, and God desires that we should take such warnings to ourselves. It may be just in the matter in which we seem to ourselves the most to be praised, we are the furthest from God) and the most displeasing to Him. “Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts,” is a prayer just as fit for you and me, as for David long ago.

In the midst of the tumult caused by the bishop’s message, the Catholics were roused by a fresh arrival Anthony Froment had come back! and scarcely had he appeared, when the Bernese ambassador himself demanded admittance at the city gates. He brought with him a young man, pale and ill. It was Peter Viret. He had been stabbed in the back by a priest at Payerne, but he was ready to preach, weak and exhausted as he was.

Farel, Viret, and Anthony Froment were all in their midst! Alexander had left. We shall hear news of him later. The bishop had forbidden preaching, and now the three great gospel preachers were all there together—all preaching, and none dared to hinder.

The Bernese ambassador demanded that Father Furbity should be brought before the council, to answer for his evil words. On the 9th of January this was done. The ambassador took his place. By his side sat Farel, Viret, and Froment. Furbity was brought in. He had been kept in prison since his last sermon. The sisters of St Claire had sung many masses and hymns to the Virgin on his behalf. "Several times," says Sister Jane, "it was proposed to him to hold a disputation with the Satan Farel; but never would he consent, saying he would not put divine things before a man so vile and wicked, nor would he condescend to hear him, which much enraged the caitiff, who saw how the reverend father despised him."

The Bernese ambassador, finding that Furbity refused to give any explanation of his words and deeds, desired the council to punish him for contempt of authority. He demanded also a church for the preaching of the gospel. "If you refuse," he said, "our alliance is over. Here are the letters of our alliance, take them back." The council dared not refuse. The end of the matter was that Furbity had to promise he would hold a public discussion with Farel in the Town Hall on the 29th of January. In the meantime he was kept in prison, "where," says Sister Jane, "he received many letters from the sisters, and wrote many to them, and I doubt not God gave him great consolation, and caused him to have frequent visits from His angels, although I only know this dimly."

I cannot in this short history give you a full account of the discussion at the Town Hall. Farel kept to the point that the Bible, and the Bible only, is the one authority for doctrine and practice; and he said further that all Christian people were bound to read the Bible diligently, and to submit to that only in all matters of faith and conduct. Furbity maintained that the priests only might read the Bible, and explain it to the people, according to



the meaning given to it by the councils. Furbity further endeavoured to prove that authority rests in the bishops, and in his attempts to quote a verse to prove this, he read by mistake the verse which says that a bishop ought to be the husband of one wife; and to explain that there should be bishops in authority over bishoprics, he was equally unfortunate in quoting the verse, "his bishopric let another take."

"As to that good bishop, Judas, to whom you refer," replied Farel," he who sold the Saviour of the world, he has had alas! many successors who, instead of preaching the Word of God, carry the bag."

For several days the discussion lasted. At the end of it Father Furbity was taken back to his prison. In the meanwhile the priests had not been idle; some of them preached diligently against heretics; some went about telling strange stories to warn all good Christians against the three devils, Farel, Viret, and Froment.

"It is plain that Farel is a devil," they said: "he has no whites to his eyes, his beard is red and stiff, and there is a devil in each hair of it; he has horns and cloven feet like a bullock: moreover he is the son of a Jew."

The landlord of the Black Head, where the preachers lodged, did his best to spread these stories about the town. This man had two wives, one of whom was the servant who waited on the preachers. Anthony remarked that both the landlord and the servant made wry faces at one another, as they listened to the conversation at dinner-time. It was very unpleasant to them to hear the preachers talking together of God and His Word.

"I would rather," the landlord said, "that they went away without paying their bill, if only they would go a long way off, and never come back"

"Only think," added the maid, "I followed them up-stairs one night when they were going to bed. I peeped through a hole in the door. What did I see?"

They were feeding devils! Yes, I can assure you, it was just as I tell you. The devils were like black cats, with fiery eyes. They had crooked pointed claws. They were under the table, moving backwards and forwards; I saw all this with my own eyes through the hole.” The priests repeated these stories to all who would listen, adding more of their own composition.

The Huguenots cared but little for this idle talk; but, just as a discussion was going on in the Town Hall, they were startled by the news that some Catholics had stabbed in the street two Huguenot citizens. One was dangerously wounded, the other, a worthy respectable tradesman, was dead. Neither of them had given any cause for the attack made upon them. A large body of Huguenots drew up before the Town Hall. Four of them went into the council room, where they found the Bernese ambassador. He had just arrived to warn the council that a massacre was about to begin. The four Huguenots brought the same tidings. They said the priests had resolved upon another riot.

The council sent out officers immediately to arrest the murderers. But where were they?

“No doubt they are hidden in the bishop’s palace,” said the Huguenots; “he is most likely at the bottom of the plot.”

The magistrates commanded the palace doors to be opened, and they searched the house from the garrets to the cellars, but not a trace could they find of the murderers. They left a guard of Huguenot soldiers in the house, and went to search elsewhere. An hour or two later, when it was quite dark, as the Huguenot soldiers sat keeping watch in the hall of the palace, a low voice was heard through the key-hole.

It was someone speaking from the street outside. A soldier put his ear to the key-hole. A voice repeated the name of one of the maids. One of the

Huguenots, imitating a woman's voice, said "What do you want?" "I want some keys," replied the speaker outside," I want them for Portier and Claude Pennet"

Portier was the bishop's secretary, the same who had stabbed the young Huguenot a year before in the cathedral. Pennet was one of the murderers on the present occasion.

"What will you do with them?" asked the Huguenot

"I shall take them to St Peter's church, where they are hidden," replied the voice through the key-hole.

That was just what the Huguenots wanted to know. They threw open the door, and the speaker, who was a priest, seeing an armed man, instead of the maid, fled in terror. The magistrates, hearing the tidings, went themselves to the church, or rather the cathedral. They took a number of officers with them, carrying torches. They wandered over the great cathedral —through the side chapels, the galleries, the vestries—all in vain. At last, after three long hours, they determined to go up the winding stairs into the tower. The officer who first reached the top of the tower caught sight, in a dark corner, of some sparkling eyes, which shone in the light of his torch. Pennet and his accomplice Portier were crouching in the corner, shaking and trembling from head to foot.

Very speedily they were locked up in the prison of the Town Hall.

Meanwhile the Huguenot soldiers who had remained in the palace, were chatting and joking with the bishop's servants. They talked about Portier, and made various disrespectful remarks concerning him. "Indeed," said the servants, "Portier is not such a nobody as you suppose; he has confidential letters from my lord the bishop, yes, and from his highness the Duke of Savoy himself."

“Indeed!” said the Huguenots, who saw they were on the eve of making a great discovery; “you don’t mean us to believe that such grand people trouble themselves to write to Portier. You must have dreamt it.”

“There are the letters in his cupboard,” answered the servants. “If you don’t believe it, we should only have to get the cupboard open, and you would see them, with the duke’s great seal, too.”

Up sprang the Huguenots, and in another moment the cupboard was broken open, and the letters all cleared out and carried off to the council. Great was the horror and consternation of the citizens of Geneva, when these startling letters were read before them. They now saw the fearful pit, upon the brink of which they had been standing.

Their bishop himself had written to Portier appointing a governor, who was to have absolute power in Geneva, with no law but that of his own will. He was to put to death whom he would, being answerable to no one but the bishop. To carry out this plot, the bishop had entered into a compact with his old enemy, the Duke of Savoy. The duke had sent blank warrants, with his seal attached to them. Any citizen might thus be seized in the name of the duke, and according to the pleasure of the bishop. Just as Herod and Pilate had forgotten their enmity in order to join in the murder of the Son of God, so had the duke, and his rival the bishop, now joined hands to put down the blessed gospel which was hateful alike to both. The bishop, whom the council had trusted, had betrayed them to their bitterest enemy.

Portier had now enough to answer for. He was kept in prison awaiting his trial. Pennet, who had murdered the good tradesman, was tried at once.

His brother, who had stabbed the other man, could not be found. He was hidden in the house of a beggar-woman, where Sister Jane and her nuns supplied him with food.

Claude Pennet, the murderer, was condemned to death by a Catholic magistrate. There were some amongst the Catholics who cared more for the laws and liberties of their city than for the praise and goodwill of the priests.

But that you may know how this matter was looked upon by the priests and their friends, I must relate it to you in the words of Sister Jane. It is well to hear both sides of a story, and you shall hear both in the present case.

“The Christians were now beginning to fail in courage, and day by day more were perverted, so that no Christian dared to say a word, without being put to death for it. For one day a perverse heretic spoke in mockery of the Holy Church and of the divine sacraments, saying words so contemptuous, that a true Christian who heard them could not bear it. He therefore drew his sword, and killed the heretic on the spot. But the Christian was pursued, and caught in the tower of St. Peter’s, and executed on the day of St. Agatha. And it was proposed to him first that he should be a gospeller, in which case he should be forgiven. But he said that he would not, for the sake of this passing life, be the servant of iniquity.”

I would observe that as Pennet was condemned by a Catholic magistrate, it is not likely that he was offered his life on condition of being a “gospeller.”

“He then asked that he might see the reverend father (Furbity) who was in prison. When they saw one another they could not refrain from weeping. Then this good Catholic confessed, and declared how he was condemned to the gibbet for the love of Jesus Christ, and the reverend father kissed him, saying, ‘Sir Claude, go joyfully to enjoy yourself. This is your martyrdom, do not doubt it, for Heaven is open to you, and the angels wait for you.’ And when he passed before the convent of St. Clara, he said to his sister,

‘My sister, go and tell those ladies I implore them to pray for my poor soul, for I am going my way joyfully.’”

I cannot explain to you why the ladies were to pray for his poor soul, as he believed he was going straight to Heaven, where the angels were waiting for him. But to return to Sister Jane.

“When the message came to the sisters, they were just sitting down to dinner. Some of them became insensible, and made their dinner of sorrow. When he had been hanging three days on the gibbet, his face was as rosy, and his mouth as fresh, as when he was alive, and it is said that a white dove was seen hovering over his head, with other evident signs. This good Christian had a brother not less ardent and zealous for the holy Catholic faith; he was hidden in the house of a beggar. One night he came to the convent, barefoot, in the hard frost, and took leave of the sisters weeping bitterly. In the morning he escaped in a disguise, and was thus saved by the grace of God.

“And on the loth of March was beheaded the secretary Portier, because he was found with letters from my lord the bishop, saying that he might catch Lutherans wherever he could, and kill them, or hang them on a tree without making any difficulty about it. And for this he suffered martyrdom that afternoon of the loth of March; and there was great mourning for him, for he was a worthy man, and like the other he made a holy end. And the dogs would not allow him to be taken down from the gibbet: therefore this holy body remained hanging there with thieves and murderers; and, they say, many beautiful signs were seen; but, as I do not know the truth as to this, I will not write them.

“And that day was executed a thief and robber of the Lutheran sect, whom the monks exhorted that he should die in the faith, but on the way to the

execution he was taken from their hands, and given to Farel to be preached to. So he died a heretic. And a miraculous thing happened thereupon, when he was hung on the gibbet There was a woman who had been hung there a year before, who had died in the faith of our holy mother church, and miraculously did she turn towards this Lutheran boy, who was hung on a gibbet by her side, and opening her mouth wide, she bit him on the chin. And to see this admirable sight, crowds ran together from all parts of the city, and they saw the woman turning again and again to bite the boy. More than 4000 persons beheld this miracle.”

You have now heard both sides of the story. And let us not forget that the same old serpent, who could thus persuade the poor nuns that an ungodly murderer was a saint and martyr, can persuade you and me that evil is good, and good evil, and none but God Himself can give to us the eye-salve which we all need as much as Sister Jane.

With regard to the last miracle, I would mention that miraculous sights were by no means uncommon at Geneva. It was quite usual on a dark night, for the priests to call the passers-by to look into the cemetery, “There,” they said, “you see the poor souls from purgatory, who are come back to entreat their friends and relations to pay for masses to deliver them out of torment. Do you not see them? There is one! there is another!” And the horror-stricken people beheld here and there a little flame slowly moving amongst the long grass—sometimes quite a company of flames, all wandering about in a restless manner.

But it happened at last, that a strong-minded Huguenot pursued one of the flames, and caught it. It was a little crab with a small wax taper fastened on its back.

In fact so many were the miracles worked at this time by the priests that the Council was requested to interfere. It was represented to the Council that the priests were “growing fat, and their faces red as lobsters” (so writes the chronicler), in consequence of the large sums they received from the poor mothers of Geneva, whose babies had died without baptism. When such a calamity happened, a priest was always ready to raise the dead baby to life. It is true this miracle was not performed in the presence of the parents, but only in the church, whither the baby was carried by the priests. As soon as the baby was baptised it invariably died again, and was buried at once. But the mother had the happiness of knowing that her child was at least on the way to Paradise, instead of being sent for all eternity to dwell in “the suburbs of hell” In this month of May, therefore, the Council decreed that the priests and monks were strictly forbidden to work miracles any more, under penalty of their severe displeasure.



## *Chapter 57*

WALTER FAREL

**I**t is refreshing to turn from man to God, from the foolishness which is poured out from the mouth of fools (such as by nature we all are) to the rivers of living water that flow forth from the heart that believes in Jesus. Let us listen now to some words of William Farel, taken from two letters written by him in that spring of 1534.

“Grace, peace, and mercy, from God our Father, by our Lord Jesus, the One only Saviour and Redeemer, who died for us, and who reigns in the glory of Heaven, where we must seek Him. For He alone is our true Heavenly treasure—the which, if by true faith we possess it, cannot be taken away from us, although all may rise up against Him. And this do we find by experience day by day, according as it pleases the Eternal Father to open the door for us to proclaim His Son. And if God increased our courage, we should see yet more; but we have so many restive horses, who instead of going forward go backwards: not only useless themselves, but hindering others, that it seems to me the words of Jesus are fulfilled which He spoke to the Pharisees, namely, that they take away the key of

knowledge, and that those who would enter in they hinder. But, whatever may be the cross and the hindrance, God will not leave His work unfinished; He will perfect His holy will, and bring the wicked to light.

“The enemy ceases not to contrive new inventions and falsehoods; but God will turn all to their confusion, for lies cannot conquer truth. The light must shine at last, and the darkness give place to it You know how the Lord has visited my house, allowing my brothers to be put to the test, chiefly the one younger than I, who has been a long time in prison. He has been condemned to imprisonment for life and with the loss of all his goods.”

This brother was Walter. He and his wife had both made an open confession of Christ His imprisonment was a great sorrow to William, not only for his brother’s sake, but for the sake of his old mother, now left a widow. Walter, it would seem, had been living with her, or, in any case, in the neighbourhood. He was imprisoned at Gap.

In the next letter William says, “Grace, peace, and mercy, from God our good Father, by His only Son Jesus, our salvation and life—who is the stone of stumbling, against whom, both in His own Person, and that of His Members, the world has risen up in battle from the beginning, and does so still, and will do so in the time to come—but all in vain : for there is no counsel, nor device, nor wisdom against God; and when the wicked lift up their horns, it is that they may be broken. And whatever it may be that happens to the righteous, let them not lose courage: let them say with the holy prophet, in full faith and assurance, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me.’ O how happy is the man to whom the Lord gives this grace! How nobly all goes on, when all is lost as to the world! Then we make experience of the power of God, who mightily helps His own, when they are trusting in none other than in Him.

“But when we go down into Egypt, and trust in men, God shews Himself to be true, by letting us feel what men are. I have made this experience as to my brother, who has been long in prison. He, desiring to have help from some, and I thinking that those to whom he was looking were better friends than they are, God knows how it then came to pass. I had given in to the judgment of others against my own judgment. But God be praised! May His good pleasure be done! If the blessed Father, of His own will, desires to set him free, He has all power in His hands and He will do it; if otherwise, let it be as is good in His eyes, and it will be so; but I will not cease to pray for him, as the faithful did when Peter was in prison, nor to use such means as Paul used.

“And may we honour and adore our God with more purity than we have hitherto done, fearing the Lord more than heretofore; and may all fear of man be cast out from us; may we stand in fear of the curse of God, which falls upon all who have their confidence elsewhere than in God; and may we take with both hands, the blessing prepared for those who suffer for Jesus. And, oh, that it may please the Lord to shew this clearly to the poor prisoner, so that, having full knowledge, he may come forward and declare that which there is to declare about the blessed Saviour: for that which troubles me most is that he has not yet been well taught, and I fear he understands but little. And the poor widow, the poor sorrowing mother, do not let her be forgotten in your prayers. And may He who can do all things, order all for His own glory, leading us by His Holy Spirit. And may we be willing to be led by the Spirit, giving up all other prudence, all other wisdom, all other guidance, so that all that is in us, all thoughts, all deeds, and all words, may be to the honour and glory of God, and the furtherance of His holy Word!”

## *Chapter 58*

### LIGHT AND DARKNESS

**A**t the time that Farel was writing thus, another servant of the Lord was truly “taking with both hands the blessing prepared for those who suffer for Jesus.” Alexander, who had been driven from Geneva, had gone to preach the gospel at Lyons. Great blessing followed his preaching. When the sermon was over he hid himself in the house of some gospeller, and appeared again to preach in another part of the town; but in the week following Easter, the priests found him. Loaded with chains he was sent to Paris for his trial, guarded by soldiers. As they journeyed along Alexander spoke of the love of Christ. The captain who guarded him, and some of the soldiers, were turned to the Lord. At the inns on the way Alexander preached, and numbers were saved. The story that follows is a short one. He was tortured at Paris till he was a hopeless cripple. He was then condemned to be burnt alive. Alexander’s face beamed with joy at this sentence, which was to send him from the tortures and blasphemies of the priests, into the presence of his Beloved. He preached till the last moment. A monk called out to him, “Recant, or hold your tongue.” Alexander replied, “I will not

give up Jesus. Depart from me! deceivers of the people!” As the monks looked at his ashes, some said, “If he is not saved who will be?”

Meanwhile the priests of Geneva had busied themselves in finding a new preacher to take the place of Father Furbity. The Bernese, who considered themselves personally insulted by Furbity’s sermons, insisted that he should still be kept in prison. There was a Franciscan monk of the name of Courtelier, who was of great repute at Chambéry. He was invited to Geneva to preach the lent sermons in the church of the Franciscan convent. The Franciscan was one of those people who desire to please everybody, and to this end he spoke smooth words, paying compliments alike to the priests and the gossippers. He even attempted to preach the gospel, but so contradicted himself in every sentence that his sermon became most bewildering.

“You cannot teach the truth, for you do not know it,” said Farel, suddenly standing up; and the monk was silent. He continued his course of sermons, or rather his course of compliments, but the Genevese were not thus to be caught. They disliked to be told of nothing but their virtues and holiness. “We don’t want to please either gentlemen or ladies,” they said.

In vain the Bernese ambassadors demanded a church for Farel also. The council always had some excuse ready. “You complain,” said the ambassadors, “that our preachers are preaching in holes and corners like pig-styes. Give us a church; you need not go there unless you like, but all will then have fair play.” But the council still replied they had no right to the churches, they belonged to the bishop.

One Sunday in March, when Father Courtelier had just finished his sermon, and the people were leaving the church, our friend Baudichon stood up in the midst, and announced that William Farel would preach there

that same day, and that the bells would be rung to give notice to the city. The monks stood aghast; but Baudichon and his friends proceeded to the belfry and rang loud peals during one hour. In the meanwhile the Huguenots took possession of the convent cloisters, which would hold more people than the church—perhaps as many as four or five thousand. By the end of the hour the cloisters were crowded with Huguenots and Catholics alike. The Catholics waited anxiously to see the wonderful preacher, of whom they had heard such tales.

To their utter astonishment he appeared in his usual dress, —no robes, no gown but the Spanish cloak he always wore, and the brimmed cap which was only worn by laymen.

The sermon began. Such words of life and power as had never before been heard in the old cloisters. None listened more attentively than one of the monks, who was a bitter enemy to the gospel. The words came to him from Heaven, and that day, for the first time, Christ shone down in His love and grace into the heart of the poor Franciscan. This monk was James Bernard, brother to Claude Bernard, the Huguenot, of whom you have heard before.

The next day the priests and their friends appeared before the council, to complain of the strange doings at the convent. At the same moment the Bernese came into the council-room. “We have long asked you for a church,” they said, “and now a place has been provided by the inspiration of God, without our help. That cloister has been given to Farel by the Lord Himself; beware lest you hinder him.” The council thought it best to leave the matter alone. The ambassadors now left Geneva. “We commend our preachers to you,” they said to the Huguenots. Claude Bernard took the

three preachers thenceforth to live in his house, where they were in better quarters than at the “Black Head.”

The Council of Friburg now in their turn sent messengers to Geneva. They were bitterly displeased at the welcome given to William Farel; but finding that the Council of Geneva was unable or unwilling to stop the gospel preaching, they declared the alliance between Friburg and Geneva at an end, and returned home. The priests thus lost their best friends. Every day the gospel meetings were more crowded—every day the believers were multiplied.

The priests were now at their wits’ end; but they had not come to the end of their large stock of miracles. A miracle, more startling than any of the former ones, was published through the streets of Geneva. The Virgin Mary herself, dressed all in white, had appeared to one of the curates. She had told him that a grand procession must be made in Geneva and all the villages around. She said if this were not done, the city would be swallowed up; if it were done speedily, the heretics would burst asunder in the midst, like Judas. The Huguenots, who were so successful in catching crabs in the churchyard, were determined to lay hold of the “fine lady in white.” She was quickly caught, and turned out to be the curate’s housemaid. But it was in vain that this was proved to the benighted people. The procession was made, and pilgrims from all parts of Savoy flocked to Geneva. The sight of the idols, borne along with incense and music, stirred up the wrath of some of the Huguenots; they went by night to the Franciscan cloister, broke the images of St Anthony, and of eight other saints, and threw the fragments down the well of St Clara.

Sister Jane’s journal now became a black catalogue of crimes. “The Reverend Father Furbity,” she writes, “was brought before the magistrates

about eleven o'clock, after dinner, on Monday. There were there the Satan Farel and others. The Reverend Father said, 'If I am to dispute with that boy, that poor idiot Farel, I require first that all his hair should be shaved off, for it is there that the devil his master lodges, and I will then answer with my life if I fail to conquer the devils he carries about with him as his counsellors.' But this was refused him and he was taken back to his dungeon, which was a cruel thing.

"This same day the accursed Farel baptised a child in their accursed manner, and even good Christians went to see how it was done.

"On Sunday the wretch Farel married a man and woman according to their form without any solemnity or devotion.

"On the Sunday Misericordia, a rich perverted lady came to the Convent of St. Clara to talk to the sisters, and not being able to keep in her venom, she poured it forth, saying the world had been all in error till now, and in idolatry, and that our forefathers lived in evil ways, because the commandments of God had not been made known to them. The mother vicar replied to this lady, that if she would not talk devoutly as in olden times, they would make 'wooden faces' (that is, turn a deaf ear), 'for,' she said, 'you have been drinking the poison of that cursed Farel.' And at last, as she continued her remarks, the nuns rose up and barred the door in her face; but nevertheless she stood there a long time talking to the door, and saying the sisters were more obedient to the devil than to God.

"The day of the Holy Cross a Franciscan monk took off his frock after the preaching, and in contempt he trod it under foot, to the great joy of the heretics."

Thus wrote this poor blind nun, encouraged in her sin and folly by the blind leaders of the blind, who called themselves the priests of God. It may



be, as you read this, that you think of these wretched men with anger and contempt. But there was One who, whilst “He looked upon them with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts,” could yet yearn over them in love and grace: for there were in that list of blaspheming priests those whose names had been written in the Book of Life, before the foundation of the world, in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain for their sin and hatred.

On a Sunday in May, after the sermon, the believers met in the Franciscan cloister to break bread. To their surprise, a priest, in his splendid robes, came up to the table. One by one did he take off his gorgeous trappings—his stole, his cope, his alb. He flung them on the ground, and stood there in a plain citizen’s dress. “I throw off,” he said, “the old man, and stand here a prisoner to the gospel of the Lord. Brethren, I will live and die with you, for Jesus Christ’s sake.” The gossellers looked at the priest with tears of joy, and “the layman” Farel held forth to him the bread and wine, and all together thanked the Lord for His grace and goodness. This priest was Louis Bernard, the brother of James and Claude.

God had greatly blessed this family. Claude’s little daughter, only seven or eight years old, was a bright witness for Christ. The priests, who could not answer the texts she repeated to them, said she was possessed. It must have been a happy party who met in Claude Bernard’s house—the three brothers, the three preachers, and the wife and little daughter. James Bernard, who saw the truth but dimly at first, grew daily in grace and in the knowledge of God.

A fourth preacher was soon added to the party. He, too, was a banished Frenchman, a knight of St. John of Jerusalem. His name was Gaudet—and a new member was also added after a while to the Bernard family—Louis,

who had become a member of the Council of Two Hundred, married a widow lady. The priests and their friends were horror-stricken: "Louis Bernard, the priest, has dared," they said, "to marry a wife!" "You call out now," replied the Huguenots," because Bernard has a lawful wife, but you said nothing whilst the priests had any number of unlawful wives. That did not surprise you at all." It scarcely could surprise them, whilst the popes themselves set the example. It was in this same year that Pope Clement died. He was succeeded by Paul III. This man, whilst a cardinal, had disguised himself as a layman, in order to marry a lady of Bologna. The Catholic writer before referred to, thus relates his history. He had two children, a son and a daughter. His mother, his sister, his son, and his son-in-law all died, under suspicion of having been murdered by the "holy father." "He was" says this author, "the most awful monster of his time." He stirred up the emperor and the kings of France and Spain to the burning of Protestants. Being urged to the reform of the papacy, in order to stop the spread of heresy, he charged four cardinals and five bishops to state what seemed the necessary steps. They stated clearly and, plainly, the abuses, vices, and crimes of the popes, and proposed their reformation. Paul however said he would not dishonour the holy throne by confessing: their vices. He passed the bull "in cæna Domini," to curse, every holy Thursday, all who spoke against the rights and privileges of the chair of Peter. Such is the history told us; such was the bright example set before the clergy of Christendom.

## *Chapter 59*

### THE WOLF AND THE SHEPHERDS

**T**he Bishop of Geneva had not ceased to think of his deserted flock. But he thought of it as the wolf thinks, not as the shepherd. One night, in July, the chief magistrate, who was just gone to bed, was roused up by his servants. A stranger wished to speak to him on business that would admit of no delay. The stranger was a gosseller from Dauphiné. “I should grieve,” he said, “to see Geneva and the gospel brought to destruction. The army of the Duke of Savoy is-already before your city, and very early this morning, the bishop left Chambery in order to force an entrance by means of the Savoyards.”

The news was too true. The enemy was already at the gates. The bishop, with his followers, had halted at a village about two miles off. The Catholics in the town, who had long, been in the plot, had made all ready for the entrance of the enemy. They had lodged 300 Savoyards in various Catholic houses. They had spiked some of the cannon—had stuffed some with hay. They had a locksmith in readiness to open the city gates. In the middle of the night the Catholics<sup>^</sup> were to make the signal to those outside,

by waving lighted torches from the roofs of their houses. A great gun was to be fired in the Molard as a signal for the armed priests inside the town to assemble, and before morning Geneva was to be given over to her two deadly enemies. The duke had asked the help of France, and he had agreed with the bishop that, as soon as he was restored to his see, he should give it up to a young son of the duke's, receiving in return a large sum of money.

These strange tidings fell as a thunderbolt upon the ears of the magistrates. The whole city was speedily in arms. The priests, who were about to unfurl the red flag—the signal for the murder of the Huguenots—fled to hide themselves in their houses. The troops outside waited impatiently for the beacon lights, and they wondered that no torches had as yet appeared upon the house-tops.

Suddenly a bright light shone forth, but it rose higher and higher—far higher than the roof of the tallest house in Geneva. It stood still at last upon the spire of the great cathedral. “It is the light of the city-watch!” said the Savoyards, who knew Geneva. “We are discovered!” And suddenly a panic seized the army. The two generals gave the signal for retreat.

The bishop, who had observed the strange light, knew not what to make of it. Some soldiers hurried to give him the alarm, and terrified, as on the night when Baudichon, with his torches, had suddenly appeared, he sprang on his horse and galloped away at full speed. When the sun arose not an enemy remained in sight. God had saved Geneva!

Fervently did the gospellers thank God for this deliverance; and a month later they had fresh cause for thanksgiving. Baudichon, who had been seized by the Catholics at Lyons some months before, had been kept in prison, with another Huguenot, and, finally, had been sentenced by the archbishop to be burnt alive. But just after the retreat of the Savoyards from

Geneva some Bernese ambassadors were sent to transact some business with Francis I., King of France. They took the opportunity of asking for the release of Baudichon. Francis had his own reasons for wishing to be on good terms with the Swiss. He sent orders to Lyons that Baudichon and his fellow-citizen should be set free. Warmly were they welcomed home by the Huguenots of Geneva.

But the dark days were not yet over. Darker days were yet to come—darker to the eye of man, brighter to the eye of faith—for it was because of the shining of the light of the gospel in Geneva, that the prince of darkness mustered his forces against the city he feared to lose. The gossellers of Geneva were to learn how true were the words of Farel,” How nobly all goes on, when all is lost as to the world! “All was to be lost, except Christ, His gospel, and His messengers. It was very clear to the citizens of Geneva that the clouds were gathering. Tidings came that France and Burgundy had promised their help to the duke and bishop, and that a fresh attack would speedily be made. All the citizens were called to arms. The Catholics, who had so nearly betrayed their city, were closely watched lest they should bring enemies within the walls; but the Catholics had other plans. Most of them had determined to leave the city, and join the forces of the duke and bishop; except the priests, few remained.

With joy the Huguenots saw the Catholics depart; Geneva, save for the priests, was now in their own hands.

The council determined on a desperate measure for the-defence of the city. They feared lest the suburbs outside-the walls should fall into the hands of their enemies. The suburbs were large, consisting of houses and gardens, convents and churches. Orders were given that they should be entirely demolished. The work began at once. The homes of rich and poor

alike were pulled down to the ground—the beautiful houses of the rich citizens, the barns and storehouses, the ancient Priory of St. Victor, and the hovels of the poor. Six thousand citizens were thus left homeless and destitute; but the Huguenots within the walls took into their houses all alike—gospellers and Catholics—and shared with them their last loaf, and gave up to them every spare corner.

The last loaf was, alas! soon to be found in many houses. The bishop, from his retreat in Savoy, had sent orders to all towns and villages around his city of Geneva, that no provisions were to be supplied to the rebellious citizens.

The market which the country people had stocked so well with fruit and vegetables, was left empty and deserted. The bishop and the duke placed soldiers in the many castles belonging to them on all sides of the city. None could go out or come in, save at the pleasure of the soldiers. The bishop then took up his abode at Gex, about ten miles off, and ordered all his council to join him there. He gathered around him a number of priests, with whom he took counsel. “We must crush these Lutherans,” he said, “either by war or by any other means.” He then solemnly excommunicated every person left in Geneva—all who should hear the preachers, or talk to them—all who should enter the city for any purpose whatever.

The village people all around now believed Geneva to be a place inhabited by devils. They avoided it, not only out of obedience to the bishop, but from fear and terror. Some bold peasants from one village ventured to go there, for they were curious to see “the devils.” When they came back to their friends they reported that “the preachers were really men, and not devils at all” The bishop speedily stopped their tales by sending them to prison.

Thus did the clouds gather over the devoted city. But all these things did not move the gossellers; they had their preachers, and the meetings were now unhindered. Every day the Lord added to the church such as should be saved, and, in spite of all that the enemy could do, “there was great joy in that city.”

At night, when the soldiers were keeping watch at the gates and on the ramparts, the preachers would sit amongst them, and tell them the story of the cross, and of the glory of Christ. Many were thus turned to the Lord. “In the old times,” said the citizens, “the soldiers used to while away their time with idle, ill-conducted women, but now they care for nothing but preaching, and, instead of profane and filthy conversation, we hear nothing but the Word of God.”

God was indeed shewing mercy to Geneva, in saving multitudes of blind and lost sinners. And He was teaching those whom He saved glorious and blessed lessons. They were soon to learn by experience, as well as from the words of Farel, what it is to lean upon an arm of flesh. If they had been trusting in Berne rather than in God, they were to find that there is but One who can never be as a broken reed. Berne stood aloof; and though not against them, their old allies seemed either unable or unwilling to defend their cause against the duke and the bishop.

The duke meanwhile offered them terms of peace. He would forgive them everything. But it was on the condition that they should send away “these new preachers; that they should allow no more such preachings in their city; that they should receive the bishop back, and live in the faith of our Holy Mother, the Church.” Thus they might have their choice—peace and plenty and the old forms and ceremonies; or the sword and famine, and the gospel of God.

But Geneva, which two years before had driven Farel from its walls, had another spirit now.

“You ask us,” replied the council, “to give up the gospel of Jesus Christ We would sooner give up father and mother, wife and children. We would sooner lose our goods and our lives. Tell the duke we will set fire to the four corners of our city, before we send away the preachers who preach to us the word of God.” The duke and the bishop were astonished at this answer, and roused to the height of anger.

The bishop called together a great meeting of his friends and allies at the little town of Thonon, on the southern shore of the Lake of Geneva. Sister Jane thus describes it: —

“In this month of November (1534) was held a meeting at Thonon, to treat for peace for the good of the country, and all at the cost of my lord (the bishop), who, as a true prince of peace, desired by no means to shed blood, and he took pan himself in person at this assembly, with the great and excellent nobles of his country . . . and my lords the bishops and the archbishop. All which was a great expense to my said lord, and was to no purpose, for the heretics would by no means be brought to their senses, nor give up their heresies, but were more proud and insolent than before, and ceased not to destroy the images. And in December they broke and removed all the crosses all round Geneva, which was a great pity, and the rest of the year was a time of great sorrow and tribulation. And on Christmas day the Lutherans had no service, and dressed themselves in their shabby clothes just as on working days, and did not make white bread (answering to Christmas cake in England) “because Christians did it. And all advent there was no sermon preached at Geneva, except by these wretches—such a thing as was never known before, and very strange to the Christians.”



The object of the meeting of Thonon, was, as you will have seen, to decide upon some plan for bringing back the insolent, rebellious city to its obedience to the bishop. On this occasion Berne declared itself on the side of the duke and bishop! Berne, which had been the hope and strength of Geneva, as the citizens had once thought, Berne was now, if not in the ranks of the enemy, consenting in part at least, to their demands. The hope and strength of Geneva was now to be One greater than Berne. Had they lost by the exchange?

Then followed the news that the great emperor, Charles V., would also come to the help of Savoy. The Duchess of Savoy was his sister-in-law.

The terms agreed upon by the duke and bishop at the Council of Thonon were proposed to the Council of Geneva. The Bernese had consented, in some measure, though not entirely, to the proposal of these terms. The duke's offer was, that a truce should be made with Geneva for two months, to give the council time to "put down the newfangled preachers, and to return to their allegiance to the prince-bishop," The answer made by the Council of Geneva was speedily sent to their ambassador at Berne. It is well worth reading.

"As to the first article of the terms proposed, namely, that 'each party should remain quiet and take no further step,' we reply, that we desire nothing more than peace and love with regard to everyone.

"As to the second article,' that the preachers of the new faith are to be silenced and put down at Geneva, whether in public or in private,' we reply, We have no longer any preachers of the new faith at Geneva who are not put down: for, of the two who preached here during the past year, one is in prison (i.e., Father Furbity), because he would not retract what he had preached according to the new faith, and against the ancient faith and the

teaching of Jesus Christ, namely, that nobody could enter Heaven except by means of the pope and of his priests, and that to eat meat on days when meat is forbidden by the pope and his church is as great a sin as murder and theft' Also, many more similar statements, which he could not prove by the holy Scripture and by the old doctrine of Jesus Christ, but only by the writings of the new teachers, such as Thomas Aquinas and others, who only lived 400 years ago, and who are called in the holy Scriptures antichrists, because they teach otherwise than Christ has taught us. The other preacher was a priest of St. Gervais, who, finding that he could not prove by the old and holy Scripture many things which he preached, fled away without our having to drive him forth, and retired to Peney, where he took up his abode with the traitors and outlaws of Geneva. Thus, we have no longer any preacher of the new faith at Geneva, as also it is forbidden by our present laws to preach aught else than the gospel and the old doctrine of Jesus Christ

“As to the third article, ‘that each party during the truce-of two months is to be left in security as to their persons and goods on the territory of the others’ we answer, We never forbid any to come into our territory, nor did we make-war, so that we have no truce to make.

“As to the fourth article,’ that neither party is to refuse provisions to the other, in return for money, nor to stop the provisions,’ we answer, We never did refuse nor stop provisions, nor did we intend to do so, but it is the duke who has done so with regard to us.

“As to the fifth article, ‘if during the term of the truce, any shall break it, they shall be duly punished,’ we answer, We have no prisoners in our hands, except thieves and traitors, nor have we ever had any. But the duke is keeping in his hands six prisoners (in the Castle of Peney), three children

and three old men, because they listened to the preaching of the gospel, and endeavoured to live according to it, and for no other crime.

“As to the bishop, that is another affair altogether. He drove himself away, and instead of a bishop and pastor, he is a wolf to his sheep, which we are ready and willing to prove to him in the right place and at the right time, all men knowing what he has done. It is the wolves who are demanding a truce with the shepherds and the sheep.” And to this the ambassador of Geneva added a sentence of his own, “The Master of the sheepfold, who has sent shepherds to rescue His sheep from the wolves, is faithful and strong, and can do all things. May God give them grace, courage, and might to resist the wolves and to stand fast to His honour and glory!” Such was the answer of Geneva, of the little city alone against the world, but alone with God.

The Castle of Peney, mentioned in this letter, was a strong fortress belonging to the Bishop of Geneva. It was a few miles from the city, on the road to Lyons. The bishop had placed a garrison in this castle, composed of the most desperate and ruffianly of the Catholics who had fled from Geneva. He kept them there at his own expense, in order that they might waylay any “Lutherans” or Huguenots, who should venture along the road; and also in order that they might seize any provisions which were intended to supply the market at Geneva. This den of robbers became in time the prison and the grave of many of the servants of God.

## *Chapter 60*

### LIGHT IN DARKNESS, AND DARKNESS IN LIGHT

“**W**hen things seem desperate,” said William Farel, “then is the time for faith to rest in God, against all appearances, against all that man can see.

“This is what happened to faithful Abraham. When was the promise fulfilled that he should have the son of whom God had spoken? Was it not when all earthly hope was at an end in the case of himself and Sarah? And when was that promise confirmed to him? At the moment when he had the knife in his hand to slay his son Isaac.

“And when you and I see things all the contrary to that for which we are looking, when Satan stands up in greater power than ever before, then is the time to pray, for God will then show us His help, for the glory of His own great name. And truly if there is anyone who need be afraid, it is I. For though, on the one hand, God has promised me a mouth and wisdom, which none of the adversaries shall be able to gainsay or resist; on the other hand, I have plenty of warnings that those who desire to kill me would think thereby to do God service. It is true that not a hair of my head will fall,

without the will of my blessed Father, as I have often found when in dangers from which God alone could deliver me. How often when doing His errands, I have been at the brink of a violent death, how often beaten, having no refuge but prayer. And now I look to Him to have pity on you, and I know He will, if you keep your hearts loose from earth, and put no trust in men; but have all your heart and all your trust up there with Him. And then if there were a hundred thousand times more against you, and less hope than there is now as to the flesh, I am well assured God would hear your prayer, and give you your heart's desire. Faith looks at nothing but the fathomless depths of the goodness of God?

Thus spoke William Farel, and his words did not fall upon deaf ears. In spite of emperor, duke, and bishop, the King of France and the threats of Burgundy, in spite of Berne proving to be but a broken reed, the gossellers of Geneva stood firm. They were willing to suffer the loss of all things except Christ and His Word.

Day by day the work of destruction went on in the beautiful suburbs. The fragments of the ruined buildings were piled into ramparts. The gossellers denied themselves needful food to give to those who had thus become homeless. All trade was stopped, and want stared them in the face on every side.

“Let what will befall you,” said William Farel, “but see that for no threats, for no commands, you turn aside from Jesus and His Word—but cleave to that, with full purpose of heart, at the cost of your lives, and of the lives you hold dear, of the loss and ruin of all you have; let not any of these things hinder you from following Jesus. For there is nothing better spent, no money put out to better interest, than that which is lost for the gospel; for

you have the Lord's word for it, that it shall turn to good account, not only for this life, but for that which is to come."

Thus passed the winter at Geneva. The gospellers had lost much as to the things of this world, but they had gained much as to the things of God. And to them it was a happier time than they had ever known before.

For Sister Jane and her nuns, it was dark and dreary. Her tale of sorrow gives us a strange picture of the mind of those who had been trained up under the priests and friars. Each week brought some fresh trouble, which caused the poor sisters "abundance of tears and anguish."

One day an officer appeared at the convent gates, and insisted upon going over the premises to see if any part need be fortified.

Another day, a naughty boy, who had taken this opportunity of getting inside the walls, not only washed his hands in the holy water, but assured the people in the street when he came out that he had kissed several of the ladies, "which was quite an untruth," says Sister Jane. "And," she adds, "the following Friday a Lutheran apothecary died. His wife was a good Christian. When she saw he was dying, she did her duty by admonishing him to return to God, and to confess. But he would not listen, but begged and entreated her to send for the cursed Farel; but she said if he came she would leave the house, for she would have none of such company. And so he died. And as he died in his errors, his father, who was a Christian, had him cast out of the house and carried to the churchyard, that his accomplices might take him and do according to their will, for he would not own him as his son, and as for his wife, she made no more account of him than if he had been a dog."

Thus went matters on the earth below, whilst "the Lutheran apothecary" was welcomed into the presence of his Saviour above.

It is well to look at this sad picture of the heart of man, and to remember the awful truth that there is in every heart the same enmity to God. Yes, in your natural heart and in mine, there is a hatred to the blessed Lord Jesus, which is stronger than all natural affection, which is able to quench the love of parents and of children, of husbands and of wives, and to prove how true are those words of Jesus, that a man's foes shall be they of his own household. And let us watch lest the mote in our brother's eyes become to us merely an occasion of pride and self-satisfaction.

"Beware," said William Farel, "lest you indulge self, in speaking evil of poor sinners, or in mocking at their sin. Do not relate their sins in mockery or in hatred, nor in malice to those who are guilty. If you have to speak of their sin, let it be with deep compassion for their evil state, hating the sin, but desiring for them that they should be saved from it.

"For, my brethren, who are we? What have we of ourselves which is at all better than that which is in them? There is nothing but God's grace and mercy alone, which has made any difference. God, instead of leaving us in eternal death, to perish in our corruption, to go from bad to worse, as we deserved, drew us forth from the pit to have eternal life, to be saved from our sins, to go from good to better, and all by His grace alone. Therefore do not let us set ourselves up, thinking there is any good thing in us, but let us humble ourselves, seeing whence we have been taken, and thank God, giving Him all the honour and all the glory, owning that all the good is His, and comes from Him, and that from ourselves nothing comes but evil only. All that we think, say, and do, if it is from ourselves, is sin. Therefore think with pity of poor sinners, and pray to God for them."

## Chapter 61

### A LETTER THAT MAY DO FOR YOU

**Y**es, William Farel could pity them, could pray for them, and could love them. It may be well here to read a letter he wrote about this, to a Roman Catholic of Geneva, probably one of the Bernard family. It may be a word in season for you, too. For if you are not a Roman Catholic, you are none the less born in sin, and once, if not now, a sinner as dead and as lost as Peter Wernli, or as Sister Jane.

“My very dear Brother, —May grace and salvation be given to you by Jesus Christ! I have seen your answer to that which I wrote to you, and I am greatly bewildered as to how you could explain, as you do, the words of our Lord Jesus, ‘I am the vine, ye are the branches,’ as meaning the love of God and of our neighbours, true though it be, that on those two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

“I pray you, for the honour of Jesus, who died for us, that the one desire of your heart may be that Jesus should be honoured. Listen to what I now say.



“You know how, before Jesus came, the holy law of God was given, and these two commandments, to love God and our neighbour. By which commandments you say we are justified. Those who are justified have salvation, for they are pleasing to God, and are His sons and heirs, since by the righteousness they have, their hearts are made pure, and they are made God’s children. If then, by keeping the law, we have this great blessedness, what need was there that Jesus should come? Would He not have died in vain? Truly your words are contradicted by all that the holy apostle writes to the Romans and Galatians, shewing them that by faith in Jesus we are saved, and not by the law. Read, I pray you, the 3rd and 4th chapters of Romans. Think over them, praying the Lord at the same time that He may give-you the full understanding of them. You will then see how far off from that you are now. Wise men and men zealous of the law have taught just as you do, before now, and the Holy Spirit, speaking by St. Paul, firmly opposed them, showing how even the most excellent of the fathers, Abraham, was justified by faith, and not by the law. Just in the same way David speaks, shewing the blessedness of the man whose sins are covered, and to whom God does not impute iniquity. But if by the law we obtain the inheritance, faith is brought to nought, and the promise abolished. We can only come to God by faith, without which it is impossible to please Him (Heb. xi.), and by which we obtain all things, for all things are possible to him who believeth. (Mark xi.) By faith the apostles, and all righteous men, received the Holy Spirit, by whom they spake of the things of God. The branches that are in the vine are there by faith. (Rom. xi.) Nor dare any of us say that we love God and our neighbour, except by faith, for it is by faith that we have the Spirit of God shed abroad in our hearts, and thus we love God for His own sake, because He is worthy to be loved and has first loved

us. And, for the love of God, for His sake, we love our neighbour, not only our friend and brother who is kind to us, but our enemy who does us harm. These are the fitting fruits of the good tree, namely of the man who is justified by faith. No other tree will bear the fruits of that Spirit, whom we receive by faith. For however fine the appearance of the bad tree may be, it will never bear good fruit. Such an one may say, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but he will never enter into life, and the wrath of God abideth on him. And in his unbelieving heart, hatred and other evil weeds grow up, hatred even against those who never harmed him or wished him harm, and the poor unbeliever goes from bad to worse, as God has shown us in the case of the poor Jew. We must well consider that the physician is not for those who are well, but for those who are sick. And let us take heed, lest we say that we are well and righteous, like the poor Pharisees, who remained in their sins, and were never pardoned, though they said, ‘We see.’ Let us rather own ourselves sick sinners, which we truly are, so that the true Physician may give us healing and pardon, —so that being an hungred we may be fed, being cast down we may be raised up, and not that being rich we may be sent empty away, and being lifted up we may be cast down.

“The Word of God, being the true light, has no shadow, and in following it nothing but good can come to us. The things invented by men are but shadows and darkness. In following them nothing but evil can come to us. The holy food can never be hurtful, other food cannot be useful, and must do harm. How will God rebuke those who are careful to go where they can get good bread, good wine, good meat, and other things needful for the body, but when it is a question of their poor souls, will not take the trouble to enquire by whom God sends His messages—who it is who speaks the

pure truth—nor will they try the spirits whether they are of God, in order, if they say well, to conform to it, if they say falsely, to reprove them.

“With Moses and St. Paul, I would that all preached, (Num. xi., I Cor. xiv.), having their orders not of men, but of God. For if He does not send preachers, none can preach, nor can the people hear, and if they do not hear they cannot believe, and if they do not believe they cannot call upon God, and must remain unsaved.

“Jesus never did anything of Himself, but only as the Father commanded Him: and so also the apostles. Although the powers that be are ordained of God, the apostles did not take their licence from them, neither from Pilate, nor from Herod— no, nor from the Scribes and Pharisees—but, having the talent committed to them, they employed it by the grace of God, and preached the pure Word of God. A man who preaches thus is sent from God, and that which thus comes from God is in the right order, whatever the world may think of it, and nothing but good will come from such preaching; but that which is from man leads to no good, as we see in that which has happened to the Jews, who turned aside from the commandments of God, and as we see in the pope, who stands in opposition to Jesus.

“If our consciences are in our own hands, as in the case of Adam and Eve, they are badly lodged, and soon lost Poor fallen man is in sin: with no faith, and out of Christ; no better than the servant of sin. “Nor is there in him the power to raise himself, any more than there is power in a dead man to make himself alive. And if God, in His great love and mercy, does not comes to the rescue of the poor sinner, he is lost forever. (Heb.x.) He who is in Jesus, and has true faith, is no longer his own, but he belongs to Jesus, and is in the safe keeping of Jesus, who keeps His sheep, and gives them life, and saves them. It is not the sheep who keep themselves, and give themselves

life, and save themselves. If it were so, we should all be lost, seeing that, before sin came in, we were not able to keep ourselves. (Gen. iii)

“Adam was soon lost, and, in gaining the knowledge of good and evil, he and his wife learnt their nakedness, and this knowledge made them flee from God, and cover themselves with leaves. And thus all Adam’s children, knowing they are naked, fly from the face of God, and shut their ears to the voice of God, and cover themselves with leaves also. That is the best a man can do, and thus he is driven from Paradise. But he, who has perfect faith in Jesus, gives up all the goodness and power of man as nothing worth, and comes, to Jesus, who, by His grace, enlightens the blind, cleanses the lepers, raises the dead—in short, is all in all—for all our blessing and salvation is not of us, or by us, but of Jesus, and by Jesus. There would have been no need for Jesus to come, if Adam, by knowing good and evil, could have saved himself, and I am astonished that you do not search the Scriptures to give honour to God, and to learn that salvation is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy—to learn that salvation came by the holy seed who bruised the serpent’s head, and not by Adam and Eve, who are the cause of nothing but death and damnation. Jesus alone is the cause and the Author of life and salvation to all who receive them. We have no excuse, no justification, to bring to God. We are born in sin, conceived in iniquity—children of wrath, and of death. (Eph. ii.) If Jesus does not save us we are lost; but by faith in Him we are made the children of God. Coming to Jesus, weary and heavy laden, we have rest to our souls. But if we will not come to Jesus, we must sink and perish under our burdens. And an awful curse comes upon those who hinder sinners from coming to God—upon those who despise the words of men who are contemptible in the eyes of the world, but whom the Lord has

chosen. Thus was Jesus rejected, because He did not walk after the traditions of the fathers, and the customs esteemed by men—because He ate and drank with sinners, and sinners followed Him. And, therefore, the poor idiots, who neither heard nor understood the teaching of Jesus, condemned that which they had neither heard nor understood. And it is because I have known the will of the good Master, Jesus, that I am determined, by His grace given me, to do His will, and confess Him openly, well assured that the gospel, and the holy Word of God, is of God, and that man cannot prevail against it, and well assured also that the pope and his ordinances are of man, and must fall before the word of God. Perdition is from us; salvation is from God alone.

As you end your letter, saying ‘In the Name and by the help of God,’ you give me great hope that He, who has thus led you to write, will further give you intelligence as to His Name, His glory, and His power. For none can help or save but He, seeing that there is none other Name than that of Jesus by which we can be saved. What a holy prayer you make in writing those words! May God in His great goodness grant your request, by giving you His grace. You will then make the holy confession, ‘His grace is sufficient.’ You will need nothing more than that to destroy all your own arguments about righteousness by works. ‘My grace is sufficient!’ So the Lord spake to St. Paul. Take the passages about grace, and consider them. For instance, ‘If by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no-more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.’ And this grace of God, known and understood, tasted and enjoyed by faith, and by the Spirit of Jesus, who assures us of it, this grace makes us love God with all our heart, makes us prize and honour Him, and love our neighbour as ourselves. And without this grace, we can, indeed, have the

law, and the shadows, and the outward forms of the service of God, and the commandment to love God, as Moses directed; but Moses can give us nothing more than that, nor can the followers of Moses. But to come from the shadow to the truth, to serve God in reality, to be children and heirs of God, can only be by Jesus, by whom came grace and truth, and this is in order that no one should be glorified but God only, who, for love of Himself, -saves, pardons, and gives grace; giving grace in order that He alone should be just, and the Justifier; the Saviour, and saving; and none other but He, and that all should be by His grace, and not by us, nor by our doings, but by Him alone. By this grace may He cause us to walk, as His true children, living in holiness, and shewing forth our holy calling by holy works. And being His, we shall also be of one heart, one spirit, living in true peace and unity—not of this world, but of Jesus—pilgrims walking together in faith and love; and, when Jesus comes to judge the living and the dead, we shall go to meet Him, and we shall be ever with Him in the kingdom prepared for the Sons of God.”

“Postscript. —’What king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple.’ You must then give up all, as worthless things, to come to Jesus and be His disciple. All your own goodness! Yes, ‘all that he hath,’ Come as a poor beggar, with nothing at all”

## Chapter 62

### A NARROW ESCAPE

**I**t was during this winter that a stranger was observed at the gospel meetings. She attended them diligently. After a while she told our friend, Claude Bernard, that she had been obliged to leave France because she had become a gospeller. She had come to take refuge at Geneva, having lost her situation, and having now nothing to live upon.

Good Claude Bernard was touched by her tale of sorrow, and pleased with her great desire to hear the gospel. He engaged her as his servant, for now that he had three preachers living in his house, he could well find work for an extra maid. This woman, whose name was Antonia Vax, was, therefore, to be employed chiefly in waiting on the preachers, who had a room to themselves.

One day in March, Antonia brought up the dinner as usual for Farel, Viret, and Anthony. She had made some thick spinach soup. Farel looked at it, and said he liked the thin household soup much better—he would therefore “have some from the family dinner. Anthony Froment was helping himself to the spinach soup. At that moment a person came in to tell him that his

wife and children had just arrived in Geneva. Without waiting to eat a mouthful, Anthony ran off to find them. Peter Viret, who was not yet recovered from his stabbing, began to eat. Antonia told him she had made this strong thick soup on purpose to do him good.

Scarcely had he eaten it, when Antonia rushed into the room, looking wild and excited. She gave him a cup of water, and told him to drink it immediately. She would not tell him why she wished him to do so. Peter drank the water, and soon became very ill.

Claude Bernard was in great sorrow; his friend appeared to be dying. It was now discovered for the first time, that several articles which had been missing, had been stolen by Antonia. The truth flashed upon Claude's mind that Antonia had poisoned Peter. He enquired for her, but she was nowhere to be found. Someone had seen her run to the lodging where her children were, and take them hastily to the lake-side, from whence she had gone away in a boat.

Claude jumped into a boat with some of his friends, and pursued her. She was overtaken about nine miles from the town. Claude did not tell her his suspicions, but brought her back in his boat, with her children.

Antonia looked pale and frightened. When they reached the landing-place, she sprang from the boat, and whilst Claude was taking out the children, she disappeared. She was seen by some one running down a dark alley, and another person had observed her going into the house of a priest. The magistrates sent their officers to search the house, and there, in a dark underground cellar, Antonia was found. She was taken to prison, and brought to trial on the 13th of April. She at once confessed her crime. She said she had been led into it by "the round-caps"; the priests, that is to say. The priests whom she named were seized and taken to prison.



This was the first time in Geneva that priests were arrested by laymen, and judged according to the common law.

Antonia was sentenced to be beheaded. As she was brought to the scaffold, she took no notice of the immense crowd that surrounded her. But fixing her eyes upon some object unseen by the officers who led her, she waved her hand, and said, "Take them away! take them away!" "Take whom?" asked the officers. "Take them away!" repeated Antonia; "take away those round-caps! It is they who are the cause of my death!" As the axe was lifted, she once more called out in a piercing voice, "Take them away!" and her head fell.

It was soon after told through the city, that this attempted murder was only a part of the priests' plot. They had intended also to poison the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper of the gossellers, and had tried to do so. From this moment even Catholics looked with horror and suspicion at these wicked men; but Sister Jane and her nuns believed, in spite of Antonia's confession, that Peter's illness was merely accidental. Peter was for a time in the greatest danger. He recovered at last, but felt the effects of the poison, more or less, during the remainder of his life.

It was in this same spring of 1535 that James Bernard determined to hold a public meeting, and defend the faith he now held, in the face of any priests and monks who would undertake to contradict him. It was not an easy task to find any who would come forward. One after another refused. In vain the council commanded the monks to appear. They did not refuse to be present, but said they were not learned enough to speak, which was no doubt true.

Sister Jane and her nuns were also commanded to be present. But this order they at once refused to obey; "and if we are forced to go," said the

mother vicar, “we shall make such an uproar that you will have to give way, and leave us in possession of the field.” The council decided that they could do without the nuns. But how could they do without the priests or monks? Would no one come forward to answer James Bernard? It was quite plain a discussion could not be all on one side.

At last a doctor of the Sorbonne, named Caroli, made his appearance. He said he had come from Paris, and was ready to dispute, but it did not seem clear which side he meant to take. He gave out to the citizens that he was a bishop. He also said that he had disputed at Paris on the side of the gospel, against Bedier. Do you remember Bédier, who was long ago the enemy of Master Faber? He said, too, Margaret of Navarre had given him a living. All this was very bewildering to the people of Geneva. But William Farel had heard of this man before. He went to his inn, where he found Caroli at breakfast.

Farel wasted no words upon the doctor from Paris. He began at once, “You say you are driven from France for the faith. Certainly you have not deserved it, for you have done nothing that was unworthy of the pope, or worthy of Jesus Christ” The doctor was offended at these words, which was natural. He made no answer, but went on eating his breakfast in silence. At last he thought it best to make an attempt to gam the good opinion of Farel. He offered him some money, which he said he expected from France, for the relief of the poor gospellers of Geneva.”

“God,” said Farel, “will never fail either the poor or us. It is our business to give the bread of life.” Caroli was again silent.

The council made every arrangement for the discussion. Crowds were expected, and crowds came. Bernard and the three preachers were in their places, but the opposite seats were empty.

At last two champions of the pope appeared. One was a Dominican monk, the other was Caroli.

I need not give you an account of this disputation. It ended in Caroli having to defend the cause of popery single-handed. But he was so completely silenced by the arguments of Peter Viret, who was just able to get up from his sick bed, that even the Catholics admitted that the gospellers had proved their point. Several seem to have been truly converted.

Thus the Word of God had free course, and was glorified, and at the same time the faith of the gospellers was tried as never before.

The bishop, who had forbidden the country people to enter Geneva, now forbade them to trade with the citizens who went into the country for provisions. No eggs, no butter, no cheese, no meat, could be had. The hungry people would go out by night to any villages where they had friends, and bring back bread or corn.

And just at this time several amongst them were called to suffer death itself for the sake of Christ

The bishop's band of robbers, who still kept watch in the castle of Peney, were daily committing outrages upon any passersby, who were suspected of having dealings with Geneva. Many had been thus seized and carried into the castle dungeons. Some were tortured, one hanged, one torn limb from limb, by being tied to restive horses in the courtyard of the castle.

"It is impossible to tell," wrote the Council of Geneva to their ambassador at Berne, "how we are tormented by the outlaws at Peney. They have never ceased to do us injury, and do so more and more. They seize our people and our goods. They steal our cows from the mountains; they take our horses, they waylay and beat our women, and at Signy they caught a poor woman

of Geneva, coming home from market at Gep. They took her money and her goods, cut off her hand, and because she complained of this, stuck a knife into her throat, and left her dead in the high road.” They also carried off the corn from the fields, being protected in these acts of plunder by soldiers sent from France by the-bishop.

The good knight, Gaudet, was thus waylaid, and seized by the spies from Peney. You remember that he had been for some months preaching the gospel at Geneva. This faithful soldier of Christ was tortured for five days. His life was offered him, if he would give up the gospel. But Gaudet had a strength which could withstand all that the devil or man could do. “The Lord stood beside him and strengthened him.” He was condemned to be roasted alive over a slow fire, “for having settled at Geneva, for having attended sermons, and heard and preached the gospel” Such was the-charge laid against him. All the peasants of the neighbourhood were invited to have the pleasure of seeing him burnt in the castle-yard. He was fastened to a post, with burning embers under his feet. He was then burnt, limb by limb, and pricked meanwhile with the spears and halberds of his tormentors. For two days was he thus kept in torture. Meanwhile he prayed for his enemies, and told them that Christ made all suffering light to him, and that he rejoiced to endure the torment for His blessed name. The peasants went back to their homes, weeping and horror-stricken. The priests said, “Gaudet’s death will do us more mischief than, twenty of Farel’s sermons.”

Such were the acts of the bishop, of whom a Roman Catholic historian writes that he may be truly called “the apostle of Geneva,” the “defender of her rights and liberties.” Gaudet’s murder was speedily followed by other acts of brutality. A citizen of Geneva was beheaded. A poor embroiderer of Avignon, on his way to Geneva, was caught, and asked why he was going

to the heretic city? "I am going to hear the gospel," he said, "you had better come too." "No, indeed," they answered. "I entreat you to come," said the poor man; "I am utterly astonished at you, that you live so near, and do not go to the preaching. I am come all the way from Avignon for no other purpose. I implore you to come with me." "Come along, rascal," they replied, "we will teach you to listen to the devils of Geneva." Then dragging him into the castle, they gave him three lashes with the end of a rope, saying, "This is in the name of the three devils you wanted to hear, Farel, Viret, and Froment." To this the poor man made no other reply than that go he would, and that he besought them to come with him. So earnest were his entreaties, that happily for him, they came to the conclusion that he was a lunatic, and let him go.

Some of the Huguenots determined to avenge Gaudet's death, and drive the murderers from their stronghold. But they returned mournfully to Geneva. Some had been killed in the assault, others terribly wounded, and the castle was left in the hands of the enemy. "God can do greater things for you," said Farel, "than you can do for yourselves. He has ways and means which you do not understand, in order that He may have all the honour, and that you may look to Him, not to your human undertakings, and your pieces of cannon."

Yes, in God's good time the help would come. But for the present the little flock at Geneva must learn to wait upon God. Their ambassador wrote back from Berne to say that many there were roused to grief and anger by the tidings of their persecution. Yet still Berne hung back from helping them. "God has all in His own hand," said the ambassador; "He will give us all that is needful; needful not to carry out our will, but His. And this is what we must look for, if we are Christians . . . Jesus, our Redeemer, will not let

us suffer more than we can bear. To Him be honour and glory, to you His peace and grace.” The ambassador also advises them in this letter to destroy the dens of the robbers, who were at the bottom of the mischief. By this, he meant the convents of Geneva.

There would not be room in this little history to tell you all that happened to the gossellers, even at Geneva, during that year 1535. Much less would it be possible to tell you the sad but glorious stories of those in other places. But I would mention that all through the winter and spring that were past, tidings came to William Farel from his beloved France, that filled him alike with joy and with grief. Joy, that the good seed sown in the happy days of Meaux, and by the colporteurs from Lyons, had brought forth such a glorious harvest of believing men and women. Grief, for the awful storm of persecution which had burst upon them in the autumn of 1534. This was occasioned by the rage of Francis I. at some placards which had been posted up at Paris, and even in his own palace, condemning the mass as idolatry, and speaking in words true no doubt, but violent, of the awful corruption of the church of Rome. As these placards had been printed at Neuchâtel, they were, till quite lately, supposed to have been written by Farel, but from letters now discovered we find that Farel had nothing to do with them. They were written by a gosseller at Neuchâtel, most likely Anthony Marcourt

Francis, urged on by the priests, determined to root out the heretics at once. Between November 10th, 1534, and May 3rd, 1535, no less than 24 Protestants were burnt at Paris alone—many others were put to death elsewhere. This butchery began with a solemn procession through the streets of Paris. “The Bishop of Paris walked first.” we are told, “holding in his hands the holy sacrament, and by his side the three sons of the king and

of the Duke of Vendome, who held the canopy above his head. The king walked last, a torch in his hand, between two cardinals. At each station he gave the torch to the Cardinal of Lorraine, joined his hands, and falling humbly on his face, he entreated the divine mercy for his people.” The king looked on, as six gossellers were all roasted alive at one time. Very many who were not burnt, were tortured and imprisoned.

And strange to say, but a few days before the procession, the king, intelligent man as he was, had been persuaded by the clergy to pass a law, ordering that in all his dominions printing should be abolished, because it led to the spread of the “new opinions.” But a month later, the king was ashamed of such an excess of folly, and the law was not enforced.

The murder of the saints in France was carried on all through the summer and autumn of that dark year. And during that same year, the wretched king, at the entreaties of the new pope, Paul III., began a persecution of the Waldenses, which was carried on for 10 years, in the last of which, 1545, 3 of the Waldensian towns and 22 villages were destroyed—763 houses, 89 cattle sheds, and 31 barns burnt down—3,255 persons killed in cold blood, about 700 sent as slaves to the galleys, and a number of children sold, in order to be brought up as Roman Catholics.

You will remember that Walter Farel had been amongst those persecuted in France, and that he had been imprisoned in Dauphiné. He was soon after set free, probably by means of Queen Margaret. But in this summer of 1535, he was again seized. He, and his brother Claude, had ventured to Geneva, partly to see William, and partly, it would appear, to provide themselves with small Bibles and New Testaments, Concordances, and other books. The Waldensian Bible was by this time translated and printed,

Robert Olivetan having undertaken the work. But the small Bibles were, perhaps, an older translation.

The day that Walter and Claude left Geneva, in company with Anthony Saunier, they had gone with William to visit a friend. They found this friend at dinner. One of the guests was a Catholic, called Roceau. William and Anthony Saunier held an argument with Roceau, who appeared to take it in very good part. He came out to the door to help Walter to mount his horse. But scarcely were the two brothers and Anthony Saunier started on their journey, than Roceau galloped off to Peney, to give warning to the bishop's ruffians that a party of Lutherans were in the road. Seven other travellers had joined Walter, Claude, and Saunier. The Captain of Peney lost no time. He very soon overtook the little party, who were all seized and carried to a prison in Faverges, a town of Savoy. Anthony, however, managed to escape, and, after hiding, in a field of oats, made his way back to Geneva. Walter and Claude, with the other prisoners, soon after made their escape also, having paid their gaolers to release them. They took refuge amongst the Waldenses in Italy. Anthony Saunier joined them there, but was soon after caught, and imprisoned at Turin, by order of the Duke of Savoy. The Bernese demanded that he should be set free, but the duke replied that Anthony was the prisoner of "the holy father, the pope," and that he had no power to release him.



## *Chapter 63*

### SISTER BLAISINE

**D**uring the summer of 1535 we read of constant preaching, not only in houses, but in the churches. The citizens carried Farel to preach in one church after another, and at last in the cathedral itself. We read also of the breaking of the images by the citizens, a work which was begun by some children, who went into the cathedral whilst the priests were chanting at vespers the 114th Psalm. It would seem the words of the psalm that follows, were remembered by some, for a voice in the crowd called aloud, “They sing curses upon those who make idols, and trust in them, but they leave the idols standing there!” and, in a moment the children rushed upon the images, and broke them upon the pavement. The citizens were unwilling to stop short in this work of destruction till every image was demolished. They went from church to church, from convent to convent, till none remained. “It is the work of God,” they said, “and we must do it.” The priests fled in terror.

And now at last came the turn of the church of St Gervais, where the dead saints sang under the pavement on Christmas Eve. The pavement was taken

up, and under it were found a number of large empty jars, all put in a row, with a pipe -which passed from one to another, and the end of which fitted into a hole in the wall of the church. If anyone outside sang or spoke into this hole, the sound was carried under the pavement, and, echoing from these hollow jars, it made an unearthly noise like that of hollow voices speaking in a tomb.

The Council of Geneva had not ordered this destruction of the images; they had even forbidden that the preaching should be in the churches, fearing that the gossellers were going too far. They wished all changes to be made by slow degrees; but finding that the whole city took part with the gossellers, the council at last summoned the priests. "Speak up now, gentlemen," they said, "and prove to us from the Bible that the images and the mass are right. If you prove this, we will have every image restored, and the mass shall be commanded; but if you cannot prove these things, we must own that our citizens have the right on their side." The priests replied, they were poor simple men, who could not argue, but only wished to live as their fathers had done. The council did not consider that this was a proof of their being in the right. In August the command was given that the mass should cease in Geneva till further orders.

Many dark days had been noted down in Sister Jane's journal. But the story of a blacker day than any before it had now to be written. You shall hear it in her own words.

"The Sunday in the octaves of the Visitation of our Lady, the magistrates came, with the shabby preacher, William Farel, and Peter Viret, and a miserable friar, who was more like a devil than a man, and a dozen of the chief citizens, all heretics, at ten of the clock in the morning, when the poor

sisters were going to their dinner. They asked to come into the convent, for our good and our comfort, saying they were-our fathers and kind friends.”

Sister Jane then tells us that the mother vicar, “fearing a trick,” refused for a while to open the door, but the father confessor, fearing it might be broken in, advised her to give way.

“All then went straight to the chapter house, and the magistrate said, ‘Mother Abbess, make all your sisters come at once, without dispute or delay, or we shall go all over the-convent to fetch them.’ Then the mother vicar said, ‘I will not hear your sermons of perdition,’ and made all possible excuses; but the mother abbess and the father confessor, (who seem to have been frightened) obliged all the sisters to come by holy obedience, young and old, sick and well; and all being assembled, the young ones were placed before this cursed Farel and his evangelists to be flattered and deceived. Silence being made, Farel had his wish, and took for his text, ‘Mary arose and went into the-hill country,’ and he said, ‘The Virgin Mary did not live a solitary life, but was diligent in going to help and serve her aged cousin,’ and thus did he throw contempt upon holy seclusion, and religion, and it pierced the heart of the poor sisters.

“Then the mother vicar, seeing that these seducers thus thought to beguile and flatter the young sisters, stood straight up amongst the elder ones, saying, ‘Sir magistrate, as your people do not hold their tongues, I shall not hold mine either; but I shall find out what they are saying to my sisters there.’ And she went to stand amongst the young ones, and said to the preachers, ‘You are wicked seducers, but you shall get nothing by coming here.’”

It was in vain the magistrate commanded the angry lady to go back to her place, or at least to be silent. “At last they furiously commanded that the

mother should be put out of the room; and she said, ‘You are doing me a great kindness, for I desire nothing better than to be put out of your company, where I shall not hear your cursed preaching.’ Then several took her, and led her out of the chapter house.”

The sermon then proceeded, after the nuns had made a vain attempt to rush out at the door that was opened for the mother vicar’s departure. “After a while the nuns,” says Sister Jane, “began to scream, ‘Those are lies!’ and to spit in their anger upon the preacher, saying, ‘we cannot hear more of these errors!’ And the preacher was indignant, and said, ‘You, father confessor, who keep these poor blind women in this shameful captivity, why do you not make them keep silence to hear the Word of’ God? —but they cannot hear it, because they are not of God, but have corrupt hearts. Yet we know that some of these poor girls would gladly hearken to the truth of the gospel, if you and the older ones did not keep them under your power.’ Then the father confessor, quite frightened, commanded silence, saying St Paul had said women should keep silence in the churches. But the mother vicar outside had no thought of keeping silence, but went behind the wainscot, just opposite the preacher, thumping upon it with her two fists as hard as she could, and calling out, ‘Oh, wretched, accursed man, you are wasting your false words; you shall get nothing here! I pray you, my sisters, listen to nothing that he says!’ Then the heretics were more troubled than before, for she made such a noise with her fists and her screams, that the preacher became confused and bewildered. The magistrates swore they would lock her up in prison, but so firm was she in her good will that she was not afraid of death itself for the honour of God. Some of the sisters had stuffed wax into their ears that they might not hear, and the preacher, seeing they had no esteem for his words, ceased to speak, and I, who write this,

being present, and curiously examining his countenance, could well perceive that the devil and his followers cannot endure the company of the true spouses of Jesus Christ, and the sign of the holy cross, which the sisters continually made in spite of him, and in contempt of him, and of his crew.”

Sister Jane further tells us that, as they turned to go, “a sister ran behind that wicked friar, who was hideous to behold, and struck him on the shoulders with her two fists, saying, ‘Wretched apostate, make haste to begone out of my sight!’ but he answered not a word. I believe that his tongue was paralysed.”

Farel, according to Sister Jane’s account, refused to preach any more in the convent, “but there was not a day,” she adds, “that some of the sect did not come and spy out the poor nuns, and often speak words that were infamous and detestable.” She has not, however, told us what these “infamous and detestable words “were, except on one occasion, when our friend Claudine Levet came to see her sister Blaisine, who was one of the younger nuns. “She began with a false and serpent-like tongue to speak of the gospel, saying, ‘Poor ladies, you are very obstinate and blind. Do you not know God has said that His yoke is sweet and easy, and He has said, ‘Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest’; and He has not said, ‘Shut yourselves up in prison, and torment yourselves, as you are doing.’” But Claudine’s words were stopped by the nuns shutting the door in her face.

After this, “the poor sisters, counselled by our Lord, assembled one day in the chapter-house, invoking the aid of our Saviour, and of the blessed Holy Spirit, and of the holy Virgin Mary, and all the Heavenly army, with such abundance of tears that one could not hear the other. The young sisters were then asked if they meant to persevere, or to escape by any good means such

as God might inspire them to use: for some good ladies had advised them to leave the town secretly in disguise.” The young nuns replied that they would rather be torn in pieces than give way to the heretics.

Sister Blaisine alone made no answer; “she looked pensive.” The old nuns knew not what to make of this, and sent for her two aunts, who lived in the town, and begged them to talk to Blaisine, and find out her mind. But Blaisine refused to speak with any one till she was told “her heretic sister” was come to see her, “then she sprang up and went joyfully to talk with her”; but it appears the nuns had thought it right on this occasion to tell an untruth, and poor Blaisine found her aunt waiting for her, not Claudine, as she expected.

“Ah, Sister Blaisine, I know your silly thoughts, you want to be married,” said the aunt But Blaisine, without answering, only “smiled,” and returned to her cell. From this time poor Blaisine was looked upon as a black sheep—but it was not for long.

“The day of my lord St. Bartholomew the Apostle,” writes Sister Jane, “a great company of armed men came to the convent, and a poor lay-brother, thinking no harm, opened the door to them.”

A scene followed which was a terrible one to the poor nuns. Under the direction of our friend Baudichon, the “armed men,” whose arms appear to have consisted chiefly of hatchets, broke down all the images, crucifixes, and crosses, took possession of the mass-books, and lastly gave notice to the nuns that, if any now desired to have their liberty, they would take them to their relations, or to whatever place they desired; none would be forced to leave, but any who wished to leave would be protected.

The nuns, who had wearied themselves with tears and shrieks, gathered round the mother abbess. The gossellers knew that Blaisine was longing to

escape; but she dared not at first come forward. "Are you Sister Blaisine?" they asked of one nun after another. "Indeed I am not," replied each one, "nor do I wish to be."

At last poor Blaisine ventured to take a few steps towards her deliverers. The active mother vicar flew upon her, and would have dragged her back, but Baudichon and his friends held down the angry lady. Blaisine was led forth amidst the cries and bitter words of all the nuns. She was taken, Sister Jane tells us, to the house of a cobbler, where she changed her nun's dress for one which the poor sister describes as "a worldly robe, in which she looked like a dissolute and vulgar woman."

Claudine had, as you remember, astonished all her worldly friends by the plain dress which she wore from the time of her conversion. But everything that was not a "religious dress," was worldly in the eyes of Sister Jane. Thus whilst the Jews called John the Baptist a devil, on account of his austere life, the Pharisees accused "the Lord of being a gluttonous man and a wine bibber, because He ate and drank in the usual way. "If a wise man contend with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest" So has it always been—so is it still.

The nuns now determined to leave Geneva. The Duke and Duchess of Savoy had offered them a convent at Annecy. They sent a message therefore to the chief magistrate of Geneva, asking leave to depart from the city. The magistrate went at once to the convent "What day do you wish to go, fair ladies?" he asked. "To-morrow at daybreak," replied the mother vicar. "We ask leave to take only our cloaks and wraps, and each one a white handkerchief besides those we wear." "You shall go, fair ladies," said the magistrate, "and we will conduct you as far as the bridge, where our territory ends."

This bridge is just outside the town. The nuns spent the night in packing their bundles. At five in the morning they set forth, two and two, having made the sign of the cross, and promised not to speak to anyone. The magistrates sent a strong guard to protect them from the crowd which had gathered to see them depart. An innkeeper, who lived just beyond the bridge, came to meet them, and gave them each “a slice of bread, good cheese, and a good glass of wine—the best that he had.” In the meantime, the poor lay-brother went to find a large cart, in which the old and the sick were to travel.

And now began the journey. “It was a piteous thing,” says Sister Jane, “to see this holy company. The day was rainy, the road was bad, and there were some poor old nuns who had spent almost all their life in religion, never having seen the world. They fainted away, not being able to bear the open air. When they saw some cows in a field, they thought they were bears, and when some woolly sheep appeared, they thought they were ravening wolves. Though the mother vicar had given them all good shoes, most of them did not know how to walk in them, but hung them to their girdles. And thus they journeyed from five in the morning till night, during which time they had only reached St Jullien, which is a league (three miles) from Geneva.”

But here they were to have a warm welcome. The clergy and parishioners came to meet them “with great devotion, bearing a cross,” and they found beds for all the party. The next night they reached a castle, where they were welcomed just as warmly. “And in this castle were 36 beautiful rooms with fire-places, and furnished with beautiful beds with ample curtains of white and red satin, and fine quilts.” Before they left, the baron, who was lord of the castle, cheered their spirits by allowing them to see and to smell a piece



of the flesh of St. Romain, “which was very fragrant, and the good Father Garin made all the sisters kiss it,” which cured Sister Jane of a fever which she had at that time. And a day or two later the whole party reached Annecy, where we will leave them.

The convent at Geneva was now in the hands of the council. They were surprised to find in it no less than 1700 eggs, and three large barrels of fine flour, and of oil: for the nuns had always said they lived from day to day upon the alms of the faithful. “And,” says the chronicle, “it was found to be true that they slept upon vine-cuttings as they had said, but they were well hidden under their feather beds. And we know not whence came the fine ballads and love songs, of which a great number were found in their rooms.” The eggs and flour were a treasure to the starving people of Geneva, and were given away to the most needy.

And now that you have heard this strange story, how the blessed gospel of Christ was received in the nunnery of St. Claire, I would ask you solemnly to consider whether that same blessed gospel has found a warmer welcome in your heart. It is a sad truth that the convent of St. Claire is but a picture of the heart of every man and woman and child, till God in His grace has drawn them to His Son. We may not in these days employ the coarse words, and rude actions, of the poor nuns. But I would ask you, have you never gone out of the way of any one who was likely to speak to you about Christ? Have you never determined not to listen, if taken against your will to hear some “shabby preacher,” who preached the good tidings with which Christ had sent him? Have you never felt well satisfied—more than that, proud, of your zeal for what you call the Church? your religion, your goodness, your forms, and your many services? You may not have been a worshipper of images; you may not have worn a rosary or a crucifix, or

prayed to dead saints, or confessed to a priest; and you may have thanked God you are “not as such men and women are,” when you have seen “poor blinded papists “ on their knees before their idols; but it is not of papists more than of Protestants, not of Jews, or Mohammedans, more than of those who profess and call themselves Christians, that God hath said, “Ye must be born again.”

If the nuns of St Claire were born dead in sin, so were you. If they were born blind to the glory and beauty of Christ, so were you. If they were born as the deaf adder that stoppeth her ears, so were you. “There is no difference.” “Him whom man despiseth,” is the name which God, who sees the heart of man, has given to His beloved Son. “He is despised, and rejected of men:” not of some, but of all, of the race of Adam, whose hearts are alike, “enmity against God.” If that wonderful day has never dawned upon you, when the Christ whom you despised has shone into your heart—when you, who were dead, heard the voice of the Son of God, and awoke to everlasting life—you may see yourself in the chapter-house of St. Claire. “He that is not with Me is against Me.” You stand in the ranks in which Pilate and Judas stood and where the cry arose, “Not this man, but Barabbas.” You are still the enemy of God.

And! what has God to say to His enemies? Strange to say, He has words of love, deeper and tenderer than any He has spoken to the holy angels in Heaven. He tells them of “His great love wherewith He loves them, even when they are dead in sins.” Yes, “When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son” by the act of deepest love that even God could perform. He beseeches you, He prays you, therefore, to be reconciled to Him. And strange as is this immeasurable love, no less strange is it that it is this message from the heart of God, that men are most ready to

reject and to refuse. It is not the law which curses, but the gospel which saves, which the heart of man dislikes and despises. It was against this message that the nuns of St. Claire stopped their ears, as you and I have done also. To be saved as a lost, worthless, wicked, foolish sinner, is a hateful thought to every man, woman, and child. To be mended and improved, and dressed up in a sightly religion, is something to be desired; but to be cast aside, religion and all, as fast mending, is another matter. Blessed are they who can say, "This is what God has done for me: He has set me aside, once and for ever, and in my place Christ stands in the bright glory, the delight of the heart of God!"

## Chapter 64

### THE FRIENDS OF GENEVA

**T**he enemies of Geneva were preparing to strike their last blow. The Emperor Charles V. was up in arms. He had called upon the popish cantons of eastern Switzerland to go to the help of his brother-in-law, the Duke of Savoy. The duke could also count upon his nephew, the King of France; and all around the little city were his own Savoyard subjects, ready at any moment, when he gave the word of command, to close in upon Geneva, and take matters into their own hands, by means of sword and fire, of massacre and of pillage.

That part of Switzerland along the northern shores of the Lake of Geneva, which is now the canton of the Pays de-Vaud, had been for some time back the property of the Dukes of Savoy: Lausanne, the capital of the Pays de Vaud, was, as you will remember, the stronghold of popery. On all sides were the enemies of the gospel and of Geneva—but above there was God!

It was still in vain that the ambassador of Geneva appealed to the Council of Berne. With all against them, it would seem that the little flock had none who would raise a finger in their defence; but their ambassador, Claude

Savoie, bethought him of one man from whom at least he would get sympathy, though he despaired of help: this man was honest James Wildermuth.

Do you remember the old captain at Neuchâtel, who had given such a warm welcome to William Farel? To James Wildermuth did Claude Savoie betake himself.

James Wildermuth listened with grief and anger to the story of Geneva. His blood boiled when he heard that the Bernese hung back from the defence of their persecuted brethren. "If nobody else will go to the help of Geneva, I will go!" said he. "I will take my stout-hearted cousin, Ehrard of Nidan, and he and I and a handful of brave men can at least lay down our lives for the brethren, if we can do nothing else." So the old soldier went forth to call together his little band from Neuchâtel and the villages round. About nine hundred men answered to the call, —nine hundred men, and a little handful of brave women also

One of these women, grasping a two-handed sword, turned to her husband and three sons. "If you will not go," she said, "I will go alone and face the Savoyards!" But the husband and sons were quite as ready to go themselves. Thus the little army set forth. At the head of it were James Wildermuth, his cousin Ehrard, and Claude Savoie.

Was this the way in which the Lord Jesus has desired His followers to defend the gospel? We, who have been taught the Bible from our youth up, have learnt otherwise. But if we blame these good people for their want of light, let us be very careful that we are not far behind them in another matter. It may be we are far more wanting in love. Are we always ready to go to the help of a brother or sister? —to "spend and be spent" for the church of God? We may not be called to lay down our lives for the brethren,

but are we ready to put ourselves to inconveniences, to deny ourselves, to suffer loss, for the good of God's dear people? Let us in this matter remember that there may be a beam in our own eye, whilst we are talking about the mote in the eye of James Wildermuth.

On the other hand, it is needful to remark that the mistake made by these good people was a real and serious mistake. If a Christian man is contented to take the ground which was a right ground for an Old Testament believer, it is by no means a small error. Such a man is overlooking the value which God has set upon the mighty work done by His Son; he is overlooking the marvellous consequences of the death, the resurrection, and the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is making nothing of the wonderful fact that, as a seal to this glorious work, God the Holy Ghost has come down from heaven, that He (not swords and guns, armies and governments,) may be the power of the saints of God.

But these things were little known to the Christians of Switzerland three hundred years ago, and alas! they are too little known to the Christians of England now; so we will give but this glance at the blunders and mistakes of James Wildermuth, and thank God for that love to the brethren which filled his heart.

The little army went on their way. It was needful to-choose the wild mountain paths, to avoid the Savoyard troops who were posted around Geneva in every direction. Although it was still early in October, the snow was falling fast upon those high mountains; but it seemed the only safe road, and they pressed onwards.

Soon they were overtaken by messengers from the governor of Neuchâtel. The Princess Jane, who was, you remember, the owner of the little state of Neuchâtel, was also a friend of the house of Savoy. The governor forbade

the little army to go farther; they were to return at once to their homes. In vain did the officers sent by the governor command and threaten; some of the men looked perplexed, but none left their ranks.

“Comrades,” said James Wildermuth, turning to his troops, “if your courage fails you, go about your business!”

The soldiers, men and women, knelt down and asked the Lord to guide them aright. Then about half of them said that they thought it right to obey the governor and return. The rest marched on, amongst them the woman with her family.

I cannot here relate to you their many adventures. For two days they wandered on the tops of the snow-covered mountains. They were themselves heavily laden with the frozen snow. Food had they none, except that here and there they found a few cabbage-stalks and turnips in the gardens of the deserted villages. Men, women, and children had fled away at the sight of these “men in white,” and had carried their food with them.

At last, late on Saturday evening, three men came up the mountains to meet them. “We have been sent from Geneva,” they said, “to guide you by the safest road down to the valley. The duke’s soldiers are on the watch, and there is only one road by which you can avoid them.”

Wildermuth was thankful. He determined to rest one more night on the mountains, and go down to Geneva early next day; on Sunday morning, therefore, they started. They shouted with joy when, from a turn in the rocky path, they saw the towers of the gossellers’ city. At the foot of the mountains they found themselves in a deep and narrow ravine, where two men could scarcely walk abreast. On one side were the mountains, on the other a wooded bank which screened them from the village of Gingins. They were by this time faint and hungry.

“We will run to the village,” said the three guides, “and get you some food. You cannot go there yourselves without being seen by the Savoyards, but here you are safe.”

The three guides then went straight to the Savoyard general, at the castle of Gingins, and told him how well their trick had answered. They had landed the Swiss in the trap in which they were to be caught by the Savoyard army. Immediately the general called out his men: four or five thousand were ready to march. The first division, of about 1500 well trained soldiers and a number of priests, were speedily at the mouth of the ravine. The brave old captain now saw into whose hands he had fallen. He rushed forward with his little band. They dealt their blows right and left, using their muskets as clubs, for they had no time for reloading. The priests caught the eye of Wildermuth. He thought of Elijah and the priests of Baal. The Savoyards knew not what to make of their desperate enemies; even the woman with her sword made a fearful slaughter. The fearful din, the echo of the guns, and the shouts of the Swiss were heard far away. The Savoyards held out for a while, then they turned and fled in wild confusion. One hundred priests were left dead upon the field. A second battalion had come up to the rescue, but they too fled before the victorious Swiss. Many hundreds, some say 2000 Savoyards, were slaughtered; the Swiss had lost but seven men and one woman. One of these men was the husband of the brave woman who had fought so desperately; the three sons were wounded.

Claude Savoye was not in this battle. On Saturday evening a message had come to him from a friend who was staying with the governor of the Pays de Vaud, at the castle of Coppet, not far from Gingins. This friend had sent word that two Bernese officers had just arrived at Coppet. The Council of Berne had heard of Wildermuth's expedition, and these two officers had



been sent instantly to Coppet to endeavour to make terms with the governor, and prevent a battle. It was needful, Claude Savoye thought, that he should be there to see that no hindrances were put in the way of Wildermuth. He had at once set off, in the snow and the darkness, to the castle of Coppet. The governor was only too glad to have caught one of the Huguenots, and Claude Savoye was speedily locked up. Very soon on the Sunday morning the Bernese officers were startled by the sound of musketry.

The battle had begun. But the governor, knowing that the Swiss were but a handful of men, was only anxious to gain time for the Savoyards to demolish them completely. He kept back the Bernese, who were anxious to find out what was happening. He was obliged to hear mass and have his-breakfast before he could possibly attend to anything else. At last, thinking all must be well over, he set out with the Bernese, riding Claude Savoye's horse, and leading his prisoner mounted on a donkey. He thought, by this means, more thoroughly to humble the defeated Swiss. But great was his horror and astonishment to meet the terrified Savoyards flying for their lives. All they could tell him was that the Swiss were behind them, and that nobody could stand against them. The governor quickly returned to the castle of Coppet James Wildermuth and his soldiers knelt upon the field of battle, to thank God for their deliverance.

Meanwhile the tidings of the battle had reached the city of Geneva; it was rumoured that the little Swiss army was hemmed in on all sides by the Savoyards, and would be cut in pieces to a man. You can well believe that our friend Baudichon was at once up and doing. At the head of about 1000 men, he marched instantly in the direction of Gingins.

The two Bernese ambassadors had proceeded from Coppet to the field of battle; they commanded the Swiss to return home. They had been sent to make peace, they said, between the two parties. There must be no more fighting; besides, it would be useless to fight more: such a handful of men could do nothing in the long run against the great number of Savoyards.

“As to the Savoyards,” replied the Swiss, “they are too much scared to know what they are about, and it is no use to talk about them.”

The Bernese were perplexed. To gain time, they proposed to the hungry Swiss to go to the village of Founez, hard by, and get something to eat. Here they supplied them plentifully with “meat and drink.” The ambassadors then returned to Coppet, where they, too, were soon busily employed in “eating, drinking, and banqueting.” Claude Savoye and his donkey disappeared; but how he managed to escape we are not informed. It is only mentioned that he was “miraculously delivered from his enemies.”

But the Bernese lords were suddenly startled by the news that Baudichon and his army were almost at the gates of Coppet. If he once joined his forces with those of Wildermuth, all would be up with the Savoyards. The governor saw his danger. He sent some gentlemen to meet Baudichon, and to desire that three of his officers should come at once to the castle. He and the Bernese, he said, had made terms of peace very favourable to Geneva. This peace needed but to be signed by all parties. Baudichon, brave and honest as he was, suspected nothing. Three Huguenot citizens went at once to the castle; the governor put them in a boat, tied up hand and foot, and sent them off to the strong Castle of Chillon.

Baudichon waited in vain for the return of his friends. At last came a message to say that the peace was concluded, that the three citizens were only waiting till the papers were ready for their signature, and that in the

meantime the best thing Baudichon could do would be to return to Geneva and tell the good news. Baudichon returned. The governor then sent the same message to Wildermuth; and the honest man, who believed in the good faith of his enemies, now thought it right to obey the orders of Berne and return home.

By the 1st of November, Geneva was blockaded by the armies of Savoy. The villages around were plundered and burnt. The distress in the city was terrible; food and fuel were scarcely to be had. The vestments and altar-cloths were taken from the churches, and cut up into clothes for the poor.

## Chapter 65

### THE DELIVERANCE OF GENEVA

**M**eanwhile Farel prayed and preached, and Baudichon, who was in the neighbourhood of Berne, was looking around for someone who would take up the cause of the persecuted city. “Believe me,” he wrote to the Council of Geneva, “God will deliver us from the hand of our enemies. And do not be dismayed at the long delay. You will see wonders before long, and know how God can help us. Therefore be on your guard, and consent to no terms which are not, in the first place, for the honour of God and His holy gospel; and see to it that the Word of God is not bound.”

The council were of like mind with Baudichon. They called together the priests who were left in Geneva—thirty priests, out of nine hundred who had found their home there in the days of the bishop. “We have given you three months,” said the council, “to find proofs that the mass and the images are according to the Word of God. Let us hear what you have got to say.” A priest called Dupan answered for the rest “We are not so daring,” he said, “as to think we can improve upon those things which have been taught by our spiritual fathers, and decided by the Church; but, as for doing what you

demand of us, we have neither the power nor the learning that are needed.” “We determine then,” said the council, “that henceforward you say mass no more; and, instead of doing so, you are to go and hear the preaching, that you may learn what God would have you do.” “It is quite reasonable,” added the council of two hundred, “that those who profess to be pastors and teachers should first be willing to learn;” and, as the priests had pleaded their ignorance, this remark was much to the point. Some of the priests decided that they would leave Geneva. The others were willing to obey the orders of the council. They might remain in the city, on condition that they dressed themselves as other citizens, and conformed to the laws: they were to be priests no more. And now the deed was done which Farel had so long and so vainly urged upon the council. “It is not enough,” he had told them, “to conform yourselves personally to the gospel. It is right that you should make the public acknowledgment that the mass is idolatry, and that the Word of God is to be put in the place of the inventions of men.” The council had at last made an open confession of Christ, and they were now to see the deliverance of God.

There would not be space in this little history to tell you of all the variety of events which, in the counsels of God, worked together at this time for the help of the little flock who were thus witnessing for Christ. The death of Queen Catherine of Arragon in England, the quarrel of the King of France with the Duke of Savoy and with the Emperor Charles, the jealousy of Berne, lest the King of France should seize upon Savoy and take Geneva under his protection; all these were links in the chain which was to bind the hands of Satan in his attack upon the gossellers’ city. Man can see the outward events, the movements of kings and armies; but the power of God,

and the power of Satan—the unseen springs of all these movements —can be seen by the eye of faith alone.

When Geneva was reduced to the last extremity, a messenger from Berne made his way into the city. He brought a written message from the council. It was that Father Furbity should be set free. But this message had been given him, in case he should be caught on his way by the governor of the Pays de Vaud. The message with which he was really sent was to be given by word of mouth. “In three days,” he said, “you will see the castles of the Pays de Vaud in flames. The Bernese are coming!” I cannot here relate to you all the dangers and difficulties through which the army of Berne was making its way. I will only say that the three days passed by; and then, when the citizens of Geneva looking anxiously from their battlements, they saw the sky red with the flames of the burning castles. The Bernese soldiers had been charged to destroy these dens of robbers, to break the images in the towns and villages through which they passed, but spare all men, women, and children, except those who came in arms to meet them.

The Pays de Vaud was in the hands of Berne, and on the 2nd of February, 1536 the victorious army entered Geneva. The city of the gossellers was free! “In the year 1536, and in the month of February,” wrote Anthony Froment, “Geneva was delivered from her enemies by the providence of God.”

The Duke of Savoy could make no resistance. The King of France was in arms against him; the emperor had deserted his cause. Four months from that time he was driven from Savoy by the French, “All kinds of disasters,” we are told, “fell upon him at once. His country was wasted by the plague; his friends turned against him, his son, the heir to his crown, was taken away by death; his beautiful and haughty wife, Beatrice of Portugal, pierced

to the heart by so many misfortunes, died of a wasting sickness. Of all his states there was nothing left but two or three cities.” He died at last, haunted by the thought of Geneva and the gospellers. And the bishop, Peter de la Baume? He lived on for a while in his French castle. And one day, before God’s great white throne, he will stand to give account of the work he did as chief pastor of Geneva.

The Bernese did their work thoroughly and completely. The Castle of Peney was utterly demolished; the Castle of Chillon was taken. The governor had received orders from Savoy to torture first, and then kill the prisoners of Geneva, as soon as the castle should be threatened by the Bernese. There were there not only the three officers from Coppet, but the prior of the convent of St. Victor at Geneva, whose name was Bonivard. He had been one of the first of the Genevans who had risen up to defend the liberties of the city. He had been six years in the dungeons of Chillon. If you go there now, you are still shown the traces on the rocky floor worn by the feet of Bonivard, as he paced round the pillar of the dark vault where he was kept. The Bernese soldiers scarcely hoped to find the prisoners alive. But the governor had been too much afraid of Berne to touch a hair of their heads. With joy and triumph they were brought back to Geneva. But the work of William Farel was not so speedily done as the work of Berne. To the eyes of man the enemies of Geneva had melted away like the winter snow. But the great enemy of Christ, of whom all the other enemies were but the helpless tools, had other means of attack. He had failed to crush the gospel by the power of the bishop and by the armies of Savoy. He would make his next attempt by enemies within the city; but for a while these enemies did not shew themselves. All were alike rejoicing in their deliverance. Some, like the one leper, gave thanks to Him from whom their

help had come. Some glorified in their freedom, saying, “Who is lord over us?” For to them the easy yoke of Christ would be a far heavier burden than the yoke of Savoy. The service of God would be to them a more grievous bondage than the service of the prince-bishop. But of this they knew little as yet. They only knew that the duke and the bishop, the priests and the monks had vanished, and that Geneva was free.



## Chapter 66

### HOW THE LORD WASHED THE FEET OF MASTER FABER

**I**t was during the spring of that year, amidst the joy of the liberated city, that some sad tidings reached William Farel. Master Faber was dead! It was not wonderful, for he was nearly ninety years old—some say nearly a hundred—but it was none the less a bitter sorrow to the disciple who had loved him with a love so rare and so devoted. So Farel tells us; and he tells us also the tale that he had heard of Master Faber's last days. No doubt he had heard it from Gerard Roussel.

“Our revered master,” Farel relates, “was for several days so dismayed at the thought of the judgment of God, that he ceased not to say, ‘It is all over with me! I have earned for myself eternal death, because I did not dare to confess the truth before men!’ Night and day he ceased not thus to mourn and to lament. Gerard Roussel, who never left him, exhorted him in vain to take courage, and to put all his trust in Christ. Faber answered, ‘We are condemned by the just judgment of God, because we have kept back the truth, to which we ought to have borne witness before men.’ It was a grievous sight to see this pious old man delivered up to such bitter sorrow,

and to such awful terror of the judgment of God. But at last the Lord set him free from his fears, and he fell peacefully asleep upon the bosom of Christ.”

You who have read the Pilgrim’s Progress, will remember that pleasant meadow, “the other side of the fence,” into which Christian and Hopeful turned, because the King’s highway was rough to their feet. And you remember how they had to mourn over their evil choice, in the dungeons of Giant Despair. Such a dungeon had the Castle of Nèrac become to Master Faber in his last days.

Soon after the Queen of Navarre told the whole story. You will like to hear it.

“Master Faber had once said ‘O how dreary for us must the absence of Christ ever be, if we have the mind of the Spirit. And how must we long for His presence, which we can have in no other way than by leaving this earth. O death, how sweet art thou for the faithful and the spiritual heart! Thou art the entrance into life.’

“But one thought tormented him in his last days; it was that he had shrunk from the labours, and the sufferings, and the death, which he ought to have welcomed for the truth’s sake. Young James Pavannes had gone bravely to the fire, whilst he had fled. And when Berquin had stood fearlessly at the stake, again he had fled for safety. It was true he had never taken part against the truth he owned—he had never belied his faith—but ought he not, as the others had done, to have offered up his life, and sealed the truth by his death? This thought lay heavy on his heart, and the heavier was the burden of it, the nearer he drew to the moment when God would call him hence; for, he said, he had no martyr’s crown, whilst his friends would stand in theirs before the throne of God.

“One day, the Queen of Navarre invited him to dine with her, in company with other learned men, whose discourse was pleasant to her. But Faber sat at the table in great sorrow, and he began at last to weep, and when the queen asked him the reason of his sorrow, he said, ‘How can I be cheerful, my queen, when I am the greatest criminal upon the face of the earth?’

“Then the queen asked him, in wonder, what great crime he could ever have committed, for he had been a man of holy conversation from his youth up.

“‘Truly,’ he said, ‘I can think of none other than one only, which lies as a heavy burden on my conscience.’

“And the queen besought him that he would speak more clearly; and at last he said, with many tears, ‘How can I stand before the judgment seat of God, I, who have taught the holy gospel of His Son purely and simply to many others, who, by following my teaching, have had to suffer a thousand tortures, and have gone bravely to their death? And I, their cowardly teacher, fled away; as though I, an old man, as I am, had not lived enough, and more than enough; and I had no need to fear death, but rather to desire it. Yet I fled secretly from the places where the martyrs’ crowns were to be won; and I have been shamefully unfaithful to the calling of my God.’

“Then the queen talked with him, and sought to calm him by reasonings and examples, and said there would be many good and holy men before the throne of God, who had done the same as he, and that we should never doubt the goodness of the Lord. And those who were present sought only to comfort him.

“And at last the old man took courage, and said, ‘Then nothing remains for me but to go hence to God, when it shall please Him to call me, as soon as my last will is made. And I feel that I must not delay to make it, for He

calls me now.’ Then he turned his eyes to the queen, and said further, ‘I name you as my heiress, and your preacher Master Gerard’” (Gerard Roussel), “‘shall have all my books. And all my clothes, and all my possessions besides, I give to the poor; and the rest I commend to God.’

“Then the queen smiled and said, ‘But what will be left for me then, James, seeing I am to be your heiress?’

“‘I leave to you,’ he said, ‘the task of dividing all I have amongst the poor.’

“‘So be it,’ said she, ‘and I can well assure you, that inheritance is more welcome to me than if my brother, the King of France, had left me all his lands.’

“Then, with a brighter countenance, he said, ‘Now must I rest; be happy, and farewell.’ And he laid himself down upon a bed that was near at hand. And they thought he had gone to sleep; but he was sleeping in Jesus, not having had a sign of illness. And when they went to wake him, they saw that he was gone home to God.”

Margaret mourned for him sincerely, and saw him laid to rest in the church of Nérac. She herself knew too well what the sorrow was that had clouded his last days. She lived on “weary,” we are told, “of everything.” For she had had but little of that which makes life sweeter than all beside, the reproach of Christ. Yet we cannot doubt that she was one of the Lord’s weak followers, and dear to the heart of Him who bore the cross, despising the shame, for many who have feared death and shame for His sake.

To one of these, Michel d’Arande, Farel wrote, telling him of Master Faber’s last days. Michel had known Master Faber, and had learnt from his lips the gospel of God. He had believed, it moreover, and he had longed for the time when his “beloved France” should welcome it. He had preached it

in the happy days at Meaux, in company with Farel. But he, too, had turned aside from shame, and reproach, and death, and he was now a Romish bishop, near Farel's old home in Dauphiné.

Farel's letter cut Michel to the heart "It pierced me," he wrote, "with the sword of the Spirit. You exhort me so solemnly, you reproach me so justly, and that in the name of Jesus Christ, that I have not a word to say in reply. I can only beseech you to help me with your prayers, and not to cease to warn me, that I may at last be dragged forth from the slough in which I am."

But I cannot tell you whether Michel d'Arande ever came out of the slough, till he was taken from it into the Paradise of God.

We now say farewell to Master Faber. And as we leave him in his grave at Nérac, I will tell you some words of his, which he would have been glad for you to hear, and which you may be glad to hear also.

"Paul," he said, "the vessel God had filled, was dead to the world, to himself, and to the creation. He lived no more his own life, but he lived by the Spirit of God. This he tells us, when the love of Jesus, which welled up in his heart, caused him to exclaim, 'I live, yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.' He was so full of Christ that all he thought was Christ, all he spake was Christ. Four hundred and forty-nine times, or more, has he named in his epistles the name of Christ. Wherever he went, he went to, and for, Christ. Whensoever he came, he came from, and for, Christ. All he did was by, and for, Christ. He desired not to lead us to the creature, but to the Creator, to the Son of God, who made and created us the sons of God, His Father, by offering Himself up for us—who died for us, that we might have life eternal—who washed us in His blood from the leprosy of Adam, our first father, making us pure and clean. . . . It is to Him that St. Paul leads us

—not to created men or things. Let us then go to Christ in fullest trust. May He be our thought, our speech, our life, our salvation, and our all.”

With these blessed words we leave the old man, to sleep in Jesus till the day breaks, and the shadows flee away, and he shall rise from his forgotten grave to be forever with the Lord whom he loved. And let him be to you as the pillar which was set up by the wayside, where the pleasant path turned off through the smooth meadow, “the forbidden ground.”

## *Chapter 67*

### WORKS MEET FOR REPENTANCE

**T**here was much to be done at Geneva during that spring. All had to be put on a new footing. The schools were to be put into good working order. The habits and ways of the people were in need of a great change for the better. Rioting, drunkenness, and disorders of all sorts, had been only too common in the old days of popery. The house of the bishop's vicar had been a scene of vice and profligacy, which had spread corruption not only amongst the priests, but amongst many of the townspeople. The council desired that the life of the citizens should do honour to the gospel.

But even those who were truly converted to God, had much to learn. We are not to suppose that the moment a man is saved, he sees clearly, merely from the fact that he is a saved man, what are the things which are according to the holy and perfect will of God. As to his habits and practice, he has to learn carefully, diligently and prayerfully, from God's blessed Word, how he ought to walk and to please God. And "by reason of use," his senses become "exercised to discern both good and evil." Such an one is said, (see Hebrew v. 14) to be "of full age." The newly converted man, or

woman, or child, has to go as a little child to the Word of God, to learn the mind of God. Natural conscience is not a safe guide. For our thoughts are not as God's thoughts, and our own ideas of what is right and wrong are far below the standard which God has given us. What is that standard? Christ Himself. The study of Christ is not a matter of a day, or a week, or a year. Nor are those parts of the Word of God, which relate to our daily practice, learnt and understood in a moment, and unhappily those parts of the Bible are very often neglected by many who carefully study all that relates to matters of faith. It is quite true that belief must come before practice; that the foundation must be laid before the building can be begun; but if we study the first chapters of the epistles to the neglect of the last chapters, if we study the prophecies to the neglect of the book of Proverbs, we shall, without intending it, bring a terrible reproach upon the name of Christ, by our evil and foolish sayings and doings.

The truly converted man who, from ignorance of these parts of God's Word, has no better measure of right and wrong than his own untaught conscience, will constantly slip into 'little habits of dishonesty, selfishness, and untruthfulness; of unkindness, idleness, and folly, which will "cause the apothecary's ointment to send forth a stinking savour." In such cases, the world will call it hypocrisy, but it is really very often that such a man, sincere at heart, has been trusting to his own natural sense of right and wrong, and perhaps imagining that he would be "putting himself under the law," by diligently studying the directions God has given for the walk and behaviour of His saints.

These were the difficulties which now rose up in the path of William Farel. The gospellers were as yet but imperfectly taught in the Word. And those who had left popery without being converted to God, imagined that



freedom from the rule of the priests meant only liberty to do as they chose. They gladly gave up the fast days and the penances, but they meant to have in exchange the feasting and drinking in which heathens would delight. And it was not at all according to their ideas of the rights of a free citizen, that they should have William Farel preaching against swearing and gambling plays and masquerades. And it was a black day for them when the council, advised by William Farel, forbade all these things to be done, and sent a trumpeter through the town to warn all the tavern-keepers that if oaths and bad language, cards or dice, dancing or profane songs, were heard of in their houses, they would be punished by the laws of Geneva. Nor did they like to hear that all taverns were to be closed on Sundays, and also on week days during the hours of preaching.

Thus there were many who were beginning to think that the gospel was a greater tyranny than the rule of the duke and the bishop. Liberty to serve God is no liberty to the unsaved sinner. His thought of freedom is the service of Satan. Rather would he feed swine in the far country, if only he could get enough to eat, than feast in the father's house.

Complaints soon came from another quarter. The King of France, who claimed some authority over a small territory in the state of Geneva, heard that the inhabitants had been called to take an oath of obedience to the new laws. He wrote two letters to the Council of Geneva. The one was to say they were not to command any new practices in religious matters, in the parish of Thye. The other was to desire them to release Father Furbity from his prison. The council replied, "As to Thye, there, and in all other places where we have authority, we do not intend to enforce any new practices contrary to the honour and glory of God. We are certain that He, in His grace and mercy, has delivered us from those who had taught a new

religion. And we most humbly entreat your majesty, for the honour of God, to send us any number that it may please you of the most excellent of your numerous wise and learned doctors, that they may shew us by our Lord Jesus Christ, by His prophets, apostles, evangelists, and servants, speaking in His Holy Word, in what matters of Christian doctrine and practice we have erred from the truth. And this being thus proved to us, we are willing, not only in our parish of Thye, but everywhere else, to order and do as the Word of God commands, and also to punish those who shall teach to the contrary.”

With regard to Father Furbity, the council agreed to set him at liberty, if he would be willing to retract his evil words. He was therefore brought from his prison, and he promptly said, “Noble and honourable gentlemen! It is true that when I came to this town I did not know the state of affairs, and I said things which displeased you, and which were wrong. In consequence I have suffered according to the will of God. I ask your pardon; and I promise that in future I will endeavour to lead a better life, and to preach the truth better than I have done heretofore.” After making this humble speech, Father Furbity was allowed to go in peace, and he gladly departed from the city of Geneva.

On the 21st of May the Council of Geneva called the citizens together. Having consulted with William Farel, they had determined to put the question to them, whether they would now decide for popery or for the gospel. The council-general was therefore to speak for the citizens. They met together in the great church, or rather the cathedral of St. Peter; there where the blood of the young Huguenot had stained the pavement in the days of Peter Wernli.

Claude Savoye rose and spoke to the assembled crowds. “He reminded them of the flight of the bishop, the arrival of the gospel in Geneva, the glorious deliverance granted to the city, and then he added, in a voice that was heard all down the nave, “Citizens! Do you desire to live according to the gospel and the Word of God, as it is preached to us to-day? Do you declare that you will have no more masses, images and idols? No more popery? If anyone knows, and wishes to say, anything against the gospel that is now preached to us, let him do so.”

There was for a while a deep silence; then, in a loud and solemn voice, one of the citizens answered, “We all, with one accord, desire, with God’s help, to live in the faith of the holy gospel, and according to God’s Word, as it is preached to us.” Then the people held up their hands, and said, “We swear to do so. We will do so, with God’s help.”

This was saying a great deal. And as we read it, we are reminded of the Israelites who swore before Mount Sinai, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.” We know what was the end of that. At the same time we should remember that the Christians of Geneva were not ignorant as the Israelites were, that grapes will not grow upon thorns, nor figs upon thistles. Farel had taught them very far otherwise: “Man is evil, and unable to do any good thing . . . and the more he has the form of righteousness and holiness, the more is he wicked and guilty, and unclean; he is a corrupt root, and an evil tree, that can bear evil fruit only, for all that is in him is corrupt, all the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart only evil, and that continually.”

The meaning, therefore, of this pledge was not so much that each person, saved or unsaved, undertook to love and serve God, but rather that the citizens of Geneva thus owned that the preaching of the gospel was not forced upon them by the council against their will. It was as much as to say,

that it was with their full and free consent that the mass was abolished, and the gospel put in the place of the old popish forms and beliefs; that henceforward the Word of God was to be to them the rule and standard, not rubrics and canons, decrees of councils, and commands of popes.

The council then ordered an inscription to be fixed over one of the city gates, and afterwards over the entrance to the town hall, that all men might see what was the faith which was owned by Geneva: —

*“The tyranny of the Roman Antichrist having been overthrown,  
And its superstitions abolished in the year 1535;  
The most holy religion of Christ  
Having been restored in its truth and purity,  
And the Church set in good order  
By a signal favour of God;  
The enemy having been repelled and put to flight;  
And the city by a striking miracle restored to liberty;  
The senate and the people of Geneva  
Have erected and set up this monument,  
In this place:  
As a perpetual memorial  
To attest to future ages,  
Their gratitude to God.”*

This inscription was to be to Geneva as the stone of Ebenezer. And we cannot but be thankful that the city which had driven forth Farel as a “heretic and devil,” not four years before, was now willing to confess Christ before all men, and to return public thanks to God for the gospel He had sent them by the messenger they had despised and hated.

## *Chapter 68*

JOHN CALVIN

**M**eanwhile Farel found his hands more than full. Not only had he the city of Geneva laid upon his heart, but in many other places was his presence needed. Christopher Fabri, who was fighting the Lord's battles at Thonon, entreated his help. For a while he went there, but was recalled by the Council of Geneva, who said there was no one to take his place in their city. There was work enough there and elsewhere for an army of evangelists and teachers. During that spring Farel had been reading a book just published in French: It was called "The Christian Institutes." The writer of this book was a young man from Picardy. Do you remember that Robert Olivetan had a cousin, to whom he had preached the gospel at Paris some years before? This was the same young man; he had been within the last few years truly turned to God. Farel read his book with great interest. This young man's name was John Calvin.

One evening in the month of July of that year (1536) a young Frenchman, who lived at Geneva, came in great haste to Farel's lodging. "John Calvin is

here!” he said. “He has just arrived in the coach from France, and is staying at an inn for the night. To-morrow he is going on to Strasburg.”

Farel started up, and went to the inn. He found there a young man, twenty-seven years old, pale, and thin, and grave-looking; he seemed to be in bad health; he seemed also shy, and timid, and reserved.

“Do not go to Strasburg,” said William Farel. “Stay here and help me.”

The young man at once refused. He had many reasons to give for doing so. He was not a teacher, but needed to learn; he wanted to study; his health was bad—he required rest; he was naturally of a fearful and timid disposition; he was not at all the man for active work.

Farel looked sternly at the young man. “Jonah also,” he said, “wanted to flee from the presence of the Lord, but the Lord cast him into the sea”

But John Calvin replied, “I cannot stay. I need quiet. I must study where I am not disturbed. I can do that at Strasburg, but not at Geneva.”

Then Farel “fixed his eyes of fire on the young man,” and, placing his hands on his head, he spoke, in his voice of thunder: “May God curse your rest, and curse your studies, if for their sake you flee from the work He would have you do!”

Calvin trembled, and sat speechless. He says it appeared to him “that the hand of God was stretched down from Heaven, that it lay hold of him and fixed him, whether he would or no, to the place he was so impatient to leave.” At last he spoke: he said, “I will remain at Geneva, —I give myself up to the Lord’s good pleasure.”

Was Farel right in all that he had done in this matter? If it was indeed the Lord’s purpose to bring Calvin to Geneva, did it need threats and curses on the part of Farel to bring it about? And if it was the will of Farel which kept

Calvin there, far better had he buried himself in his study at Strasburg, or anywhere else.

Alas! there is not one of us who when weighed in the balance will not be found wanting. Farel, who had trusted in God for the deliverance of Geneva from the armies of Savoy, could not refrain from putting forth his hand to drag, as it were, into the Lord's work, one who seemed to him to be needful in fighting the Lord's battles against sin, the world, and the devil, in the city he loved so much.

Was it that Geneva had taken a place in the heart, which should have been emptied of all things, to be filled with Christ alone? For years back Geneva had been, next to Christ, his dearest thought. He had prayed and toiled for Geneva; he had risked his life again and again, and borne reproach and suffering and shame for this beloved city.

And do we not find how easily even the Lord's work can thus become to us a snare and a stumbling-stone? We are few of us willing, like the prophet Jeremiah, to do the Lord's bidding, without seeing any fruit of our labours, and to say as the One perfect servant, "I have spent My strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely My judgment is with the Lord, and My work with My God." Farel saw the need of Geneva: he believed that in John Calvin he saw that which met the need. He has hitherto been to us a bright example, but he too, like Peter and John—like all, except One only—must serve us also as a warning, and especially as a warning to-those to whom the souls of lost sinners are precious. It needs a strong faith to stand still and trust to God for those for whose blessing we would lay down our lives, when an opportunity comes which to our eyes seems to be just the thing required; and we are less on our guard against the flesh when it shows itself active in the things of God.

Calvin did leave Geneva for a short time, as he had promised to take one of his relations as far as Basle. On returning to Geneva, he was ill for a time. His work, therefore, had scarcely begun before a great event happened, which I must now relate to you.



## *Chapter 69*

### HOW LAUSANNE WAS TAKEN FOR CHRIST

**Y**ou will remember how many times William Farel had made vain attempts to get an entrance into Lausanne. The old city, with its proud bishop and its grand cathedral, its army of bigoted priests and ignorant monks, had again and again closed its gates against the gospel of the grace of God; but now the Pays de Vaud was in the hands of Berne, and the Bishop of Lausanne had fled. “They gave me a warm welcome at Friburg,” he wrote to his nephew, “and, I promise you, we are having good cheer.” The Bernese declared that Lausanne should have a bishop no more. They entered the town in triumph, and took possession of it in the name of the lords of Berne.

Lausanne, like Geneva, was now a free city.

The Council of Berne determined that the priests of Lausanne should be brought face to face with William Farel and Peter Viret, and any other gospellers who were able to “give a reason of the hope that was in them.” Farel had longed for this opportunity, and had told the council of his desire.

They fixed the 1st of October for the beginning of the discussion. This would allow the priests plenty of time to find able speakers.

In vain did the Emperor Charles V. write to the Council of Lausanne and to the Council of Berne to forbid these proceedings. The little Swiss cities turned a deaf ear to the great emperor who had Europe at his feet. And the emperor was just then too busy with his invasion of France to be able to attend to such small matters as the disrespect of Berne and Lausanne.

And now let us take a journey to the beautiful old city on the vine-clad hills of the Pays de Vaud, looking down on the blue lake of Geneva far below. High up on those green hills we see the towers of the great cathedral. All around are the old buildings where the bishop, the priests, and the monks had “had good cheer,” and had thundered forth threatenings and slaughter against Lutheran heretics. We see churches and convents rising above the quaint steep roofs on the hill-side. In one of these convents Peter Viret has been preaching for some months back, for the lords of Berne had demanded it from the Council of Lausanne. We see, across the still waters of the lake, the blue mountains with their snowy peaks, range behind range, till they seem to be lost in the white clouds, and we cannot tell which is cloud and which is snow. And down the steep hill-sides we see the sunny vineyards and green shady meadows. In the dark corner of one of the steep, winding streets some ill-looking fellows are waiting for the heretics from Geneva. They have been posted there by the priests to murder them.

But the heretics came in such a strong force that the murderers durst not attack them. Moreover, their plot having reached the ears of the council, they were arrested and sentenced. But the “heretics” entreated for mercy for these poor men, who knew not what they did, thereupon they were pardoned.

On Sunday morning, October 1st, the great cathedral of Lausanne was filled from end to end. Scaffoldings were put up all around to seat the immense multitude. They were interspersed with the painting and gilding, the jewellery and the pomp of the old times. And posted up on every side were the sentences concerning which the disputation was to be held. Let us read the first sentence: —

“The Holy Scripture teaches no other way of being justified, save by faith in Jesus Christ, offered up once for all, and never to be offered again; insomuch that he who puts forward any other satisfaction for the remission of sins utterly abolishes the truth which Christ has revealed.”

William Farel stands up. He says that the Lord Jesus Christ “came down into this miserable world in order that by Him we should have salvation and life. For this end He died that He might gather in one the elect people of God. Satan’s work is to scatter the sheep. The work of the Lord Jesus is to gather them.” He then asked for prayer “that the truth alone might be victorious; that the weakness and foolishness of those who speak the truth might hinder none from owning it; that all hearts might be turned to the Great Shepherd of the sheep who gave His life for His poor people; that none might seek their own honour and glory, but only that Christ should be known and owned.” And having prayed together, they separated till the next morning.

At seven o’clock on Monday the cathedral was again filled. The varied costumes showed from how many different places the hearers had come. In the centre of the cathedral were ranged the speakers on both sides—Farel, Viret, Calvin, Marcourt, and Caroli! This time Caroli was a gopeller; but Farel saw him arrive with sorrow and distrust. On the other side an array of about 174 priests, and monks in addition.

Farel stood up. He read the first sentence which was posted up. “The heavens and the earth may pass away,” he said, “but the word of the Lord cannot pass away. If, then, that word shows us no other righteousness than that which is by faith in Christ, it follows as absolutely certain that there is no other righteousness. By being made righteous we understand that sin is put away, that God imputes it to us no more. As a prisoner brought before the judge is acquitted, so God, having put away our sin, acquits us. And he, who thus receives remission of sins, is counted righteous before God, as though he had never committed any sins at all.”

I have not here the space to tell you all that Farel said further. He spoke of the work which put sin away—the work done by Jesus on the cross—the work which is dishonoured and disowned by all mention of purgatory or penance, absolutions and indulgences, and specially by the “perpetual sacrifice” of the mass. He desired someone to read the 11th chapter of Hebrews and the 15th of the Acts; and this being done, the priests were called upon to give their answer.

A priest rose up to speak for the rest. He said the Scriptures commanded peace, and forbade disputings. A disputation is therefore a sinful act of disobedience. They would rather bear in silence the reproach of being beaten in argument, than take upon themselves to decide questions which could only be decided by the universal church. They would thus be bearing the cross in meekness and humility.

Farel then spoke at length, being interrupted several times by an angry monk. “It is now your turn,” said Farel, fixing his eyes on the monk. “Stand up, and prove what you have preached during the past Lent here in Lausanne.”

The monk said he would not do so, except before competent judges. Peter Viret remarked that the Word of God was the best judge. The monk replied, “The church is above the Bible; for the Bible would have no authority, except that it is approved by the church.”

“That is as much as to say,” said Viret, “that God is not to be believed except as He is approved by men. And what judge do you desire better than one who is infallible? It is God who speaks in His Word.”

“That is no answer,” said the monk. “Anyone can quote the Bible: you explain it in your way, and I in mine: who is to say which is right? The devil quoted Scripture when he tempted Jesus. One must not only quote Scripture rightly, but interpret it rightly.”

Viret replied that the best interpreter of Scripture is Scripture itself; and that the right interpretation must always be that which honours Christ, and makes Him to be all in all—not that which honours man, and, moreover, puts money into his pocket. “And that you say that the devil quoted Scripture,” he added, “furnishes me with a weapon wherewith to smite you. For the Lord Jesus did not therefore throw contempt on Scripture, but confounded Satan by replying out of Scripture. If, therefore, the Lord did so, you ought not to refuse thus to answer us. For you are not greater than Jesus, nor are we devils, but Christian brethren.”

But the monk stood firm. No one should persuade him to dispute with heretics. The church had forbidden it, and the church must be obeyed. Thus, the chronicle tells us, he persisted in refusing to speak, except to give reasons for not speaking, until at eleven o’clock the bell rang for dinner, and the meeting adjourned.

The next day, Tuesday, a singular looking person stood up on the Catholic side. It was plain from his dress that he was neither a priest nor a monk.

“Noble, honourable, and respected gentlemen,” he said, “I am a physician, and my profession is medicine, not theology. Therefore it is not my place to discuss these matters. But as you benevolently permit each one to speak his mind, I will speak mine. Those gentlemen have said that by faith in Jesus Christ a man is justified. If this were true (which is not in the Scripture at all), the devils would of necessity be saved. For St. James says the devils believe. If they believe, they have faith. They must, then, in consequence be saved.”

The physician further said that whilst we do not find in Scripture that we are saved by faith, we find four ways by which we may be saved, 1st. By grace. Of this word the physician did not know the meaning; he seems to have thought, in a vague way, that it was some quality which some men possess, which renders them pleasing to God. In any case it was a different thing from faith. 2. By love. Of this, he said Mary Magdalen (he meant the woman in Luke vii.) was an example; for it was said her sins were forgiven because she loved much. 3. By keeping the commandments, as the Lord said. “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” (Matt, xix.) 4. By baptism, as it is written, “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

Farel stood up. “One may be a physician,” he said, “and a theologian at the same time. St. Luke was a physician, but he was learned as to the faith that is in Christ, which is the true theology. As to your objections—1. St. Paul said, ‘A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.’ This does not contradict St. James, who says ‘Faith without works is dead,’ for St. Paul speaks of true faith. He who has true faith, believing that Jesus died to save him, can understand those words of Jesus, ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him

should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ He sees the great love wherewith God loved us, even when we were His enemies. The devils never believe that. They do not believe Jesus died for them, nor do those men who have a dead faith believe it either. But he who has true faith in that love of God cannot but love God in return. If he loves Him he will keep His commandments.

“2. As to being saved by grace, it is perfectly true, it is by grace. But we receive that salvation by faith.

“3. As to love, and the case of that woman in Luke vii., we have there a plainer proof than ever of what I have just said. And none can say it more plainly than Jesus there says it, when He explains why the sinful woman loved Him so much. ‘Because much had been forgiven her.’ And that this was by faith He declares also, for He said, ‘Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee.’

“4. When the Lord said to the lawyer, ‘If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,’ He was putting him in the road by which he would be forced to come to Christ, namely, by finding out how utterly incapable he was of keeping the law. He would thus be driven, as it were, to Christ, ‘who is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.’ Before we can do one thing that pleases God, we must believe unto righteousness. Then follow the works by which our faith is shewn.

“5. As to baptism, he who believes not is damned, his baptism is not owned by God, nor is his person accepted.” (Farel seems to have thought that the text in John iii., “born of water and of the Spirit,” referred to baptism. In this he was in need of further teaching. But in the main his answer was a right one.) He spoke some time longer, till the eleven o’clock bell rang.

In the afternoon our friend the physician, whose name was Blancherose, again stood up.

“I was not satisfied,” he said, “this morning by the answer of Master William Farel. I do not know whether I expressed myself rightly, but as to what I meant to say I would walk into the fire to prove that it is true. And in case anyone should think me forward and presuming, I beg to say that I have travelled in several countries, and have taught in several great towns and universities in France. I have even been physician to the king, and later to the Princess of Orange. You know that presumptuous impostors are not put into such high positions. And, gentlemen, I am ready to deliver up into your hands some of my scholars, to the number of seven, that you may make them prisoners, if I do not prove what I am now going to say.”

The Chancellor of Berne refused this generous offer, and told Blancherose he might speak further as to the morning’s subject, but keep for the present to that.

Blancherose proceeded to say that it was easily seen by I. Cor. xiii. that we are saved by charity; for we are there told that charity is greater than faith. Farel replied, “I leave it to our friends to judge the soundness of your argument, ‘Charity is greater than faith and hope, therefore we are not saved by faith,’ You might as well say, ‘The sky is greater than the sun, therefore the sun does not give light.’”

“You say, then,” said Blancherose, indignantly, “that it is quite enough for me to believe. I may live all my life like a burglar, and it will not matter if I only believe! In that case we never need do anything right, but do all the evil we can, if we are to be saved in that way by faith without works!”

Farel answered, “St. Paul was thus blasphemed when he preached of God’s love, and of righteousness by faith, and how where sin abounded



grace did much more abound. He was blamed by those who understood nothing of the grace of God. For he who knows what grace is, and who truly believes, will never speak as you have done. He who knows himself to be a poor lost sinner, deserving nothing but hell, and who believes that, instead of hell, God has given him His holy and blessed Son to be punished in his stead, such an one will never desire to live in sin, nor to displease the God who has so loved him. Faith is not saying with the lips, 'I believe,' but it is the full assurance of the heart that knows certainly that God has completely forgiven us, on account of the work of His Son who died for us. Read," continued Farel, turning to one near him," read Romans iii., from the ninth verse to the end."

The book was opened, and the solemn words were read.

Let me entreat you, before you go on with this history to read them too. You need them, it may be, as much as the poor physician. And they were written for you as much as for him.

"And now," said Farel," behold how we are saved—freely, undeservingly, and without the works of the law!"

Blancherose replied, "I do not believe it is written so."

A Bible was at once handed to Blancherose—an ancient Bible in manuscript, bound in parchment, taken from the Franciscan convent. The passage was found for him. The wonderful words were pointed out to him.

Yes, they were there—"A man is justified by faith, without the works of the law"

Blancherose stood like one amazed. "Yes," he said, "it is true. 'A man is justified by faith.'" And another verse came into his mind—"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us," Blancherose sat down for the present, and said no more.

The schoolmaster of Veney now rose up. He said that “without the deeds of the law “might mean without keeping the law of Moses, the forms and ceremonies of the Jews. There were the New Testament commandments: we must surely keep them in order to be saved. Farel said, “My brother, you need to know what is the true condition of the poor unsaved sinner—a bad tree that cannot bring forth good fruit Think what it is to keep the commandments of God— not with the hands and the tongue only, but with the heart. Nothing short of perfect obedience can stand before God. God asks not the half of your heart, but the whole—’Be perfect, even as your Father that is in Heaven is perfect.’ Can you, with your evil heart, keep that commandment? Take a poor sick man out of his bed, tell him to take a walk, and eat a good dinner, as if he were well. You would by that means kill him. The things you tell him to do are all very well if he were in health. But to him they are death. Read Romans, chapter vii., from verse seven to the end.”

The passage was read.

“You see, my friend, there must be a surer way of being saved than keeping the law. Read now Romans viii., first four verses.”

They were read also.

And Farel then spoke on. But a priest made the old objections till the night came on. And thus the second day ended.

The third day the priests again stood up to oppose. This free forgiveness, given to those who had done nothing to deserve it, would be, alas! they said, the means of encouraging men to live in sin. There would be an end of good works and holy living, for why should any man care to do right?

“As to these disastrous consequences,” said Farel, “I would to God that the canons, priests, and monks had caused no more scandal by their words

and actions than this blessed truth has caused.”

But Farel spoke to many deaf ears. And if you tell the same blessed truth to your friends and neighbours, you will find that Blancherose and the priests, and the men and women of “Protestant England,” will, for the most part, speak the same language, and will cling to the hope so dear to the natural heart, the hope of making ourselves fit for Heaven and pleasing to God. You have had this hope, too, if you have it no longer; and if you have it still, you will find it as hard to cast it away, and to trust yourself to Christ alone, as did any priest in the Cathedral of Lausanne.

I cannot here tell you all the objections brought forward by the priests. But, as I have just been saying, you may hear the very same objections every day, amongst your own acquaintance. And the argument may be summed up in few words—which comes first, the tree or the fruit? Life or action? Fire or warmth?

In due time the second sentence was read. “Jesus is the One High Priest and Intercessor for His church.” But on this head the priests had no answer to make.

The third sentence was as follows: —” The Holy Scripture owns as the Church of God those, and those only, who confess themselves to be redeemed solely and entirely by the blood of Jesus—those who believe only in His word, and take their stand upon it, knowing that the Saviour is absent from us, as to His bodily presence, but dwelling in His church,, filling it, ruling it, and animating it by the Holy Ghost.”

The priests opposed this. Christ, they said, was present in body in the bread.

They were chiefly answered by Peter Viret. The whole of the priests were then addressed by the Chancellor of Berne. He said that if any were now

convinced of the truth, they were called upon to sign these three sentences. They might then “return home and preach the gospel,” or they might stay to the end of the discussion. Those who refused to sign must stay, and must defend their opinions. Many retired into the choir of the cathedral to sign their names. They said they were convinced. Those who refused to sign, refused also to speak.

But the Chancellor of Berne would not accept their “trifling.” Speak they must.

The doctor and the schoolmaster were more ready to give their reasons, but it would not be worthwhile to relate all that they said. The doctor’s argument was chiefly that we may readily believe the bread is changed into the body of Christ, since an egg by being hatched, is changed into a chicken. Farel and Calvin then spoke at length, and a silence followed. Then a monk rose up. “My very dear brethren,” he said, “St. Matthew says, in his 12th chapter, that for those who sin against the Holy Ghost there is no forgiveness. I, therefore, desire not to commit this sin, which is the sin of resisting the truth of God. I here confess that I have been for a long while blind and deceived. I thought I was serving God, when I was only serving men. And now I see I have no head but Jesus only. I see that there is no remission of sins, but by Him alone. I ask pardon of God for all the evil that I have done. I ask your pardon that I have taught you so badly. Forgive me, for I need your forgiveness.” And so saying, he threw off his monk’s frock, never to be worn again.

Farel rose up. “O how great, how good, how wise is our God!” he said. “He has had pity on the poor sheep that was straying in the wilderness, and He has brought it home to His holy flock. Let us thank our Lord together. Let us receive our new brother, for whom Christ has died, as Christ has

received us. Let us reproach him for nothing that is passed, but as God has washed his sins from His remembrance, so also let us remember them no more.”

After this the doctor was left single-handed to answer the gossellers. This, he said, was a task beyond the strength of Hercules. And the priests were, he said, becoming impatient as day after day the discussion went on. They complained that their bills at the inns of Lausanne were becoming ruinous, and that it was useless for them to remain, as they were not learned enough to dispute. However, with the help of the doctor, they carried on the discussion till Sunday evening. Farel then preached to the whole assembly, and all the priests returned on the following day to their homes.

But some returned to preach the Saviour they had heard of at Lausanne, and amongst those truly converted to God were some who had at first been the chief speakers on the side of Rome. On no occasion of a public discussion had so many sinners been saved.

And now began the great work which was to prove that Lausanne, too, had received the gospel. The altars and images, the holy vessels of the priests, the robes and the jewellery, were carried forth from the cathedral and the churches, as the idols from the cities of Israel. The images and crucifixes were broken in pieces. The great image called by the priests “Our Lady of Lausanne,” by the gossellers, “Diana of the Ephesians,” was reduced to atoms.

An inventory was made of the vessels and ornaments, literally “the merchandise of gold and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen and purple, and silk and scarlet, and all thyinewood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and ail manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble.”

Any persons who had given these ornaments to the churches, or whose parents or grandparents had given them, might claim them as family property. But the remainder was of such enormous value, that in addition to the value of church lands, a sum was paid into the treasury of Berne, which served for the founding of hospitals and colleges, and for a fund for the poor of the Pays de Vaud. Besides this, the old canons were allowed a pension for the remainder of their lives.

It was with this treasure that the present college, the Academy of Lausanne, was founded and endowed. And now let us return with Farel to Geneva.

# Chapter 70

## A SORROWFUL CHAPTER

**P**erhaps you expect now to hear of the happy days of Geneva—of a time of rest, and peace, and sunshine. The duke and the bishop, the monks, the nuns, and the priests have all passed away like a dream. The gospel is preached, the Bible is read, the gossellers are persecuted no more.

But Satan was none the less at work, and the sunshine was to be clouded with many a storm sweeping across the blue sky.

At first Farel's sorrows were for the towns and villages of the Pays de Vaud, rather than for Geneva. The Council of Berne chose a pastor for Lausanne—not good Peter Viret, who had been preaching and labouring then all the summer, but the false, vain, covetous Caroli. Peter Viret was to be his humble assistant.

The lords of Berne had no doubt read, but they had never understood, or rather, had never really believed, the verses we find in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, “He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all Heavens, that He might fill all things. And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.”

Was Christ no longer in Heaven? —no longer able to send pastors and teachers where He would, that the lords of Berne should have to do this? One thing we know, that it was not Christ who sent to Lausanne the impostor Caroli.

The Council of Berne then desired William Farel to find preachers and pastors for the other towns and villages of the Pays de Vaud.

But Farel had long known that though the harvest was great, the labourers were few. Peter Viret, and Christopher Fabri, and Eymer Beynon were hard at work. But “Alas!” said Farel,” most of those who know the truth prefer to die in the land of Egypt, rather than to eat manna in the wilderness.”

He himself went from village to village around Geneva, “and if you do not come to help him,” wrote Calvin to a friend, “you will soon lose him altogether, for the toil and burden are too much even for such a man of iron.”

Meanwhile Calvin was preaching in the cathedral of Geneva. He was at first scarcely noticed. But after some months, the Council of Geneva, at Farel’s recommendation, desired him to remain and give regular instruction to the people. And in a very little while Calvin had risen to be more than a teacher. His word was becoming law to the council, to the people, and, it must be owned, to Farel also. This young man, only twenty-eight years old, was listened to by Farel with respect and awe. “The old man,” we are told, “sat almost as a disciple at the foot of the young doctor.”

There can be no doubt that Calvin was naturally a very extraordinary man. He was possessed of a power of mind, and a force of will, that would have commanded men in some way or another, had he never been a Christian at all. And he was possessed of a special gift, which seemed to the Council of Geneva the one most to be desired for the good of their reformed city. We



are constantly reminded by those who have written his history of “his rare genius for system and organization.” To organise means, as you know, to form and place in order the different parts of a living body, so that all may work together, each one in its place as a part of the whole.

“He had conceived,” we are told, “an ideal of a church which was to take the place of the papacy .... Farel had been everywhere, enlightening minds one by one with the torch of the word. It was now needful to bind together the souls thus enlightened.”

But alas! if we compare these remarks with the Bible, the sad truth forces itself upon our minds that the work Calvin was thus undertaking was a work God had not given him to do.

More than that, it was a work which God has given to none to do, excepting to the God-Man who sits at His right hand, and who has already done it.

What was it which Calvin thus set about to organise? It was the Church of God.

“He had conceived an ideal of a church which was to take the place of the papacy.”

And now let us turn to the 12th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. There we read of a body “organized” not by man, but by God Himself. That body of which God Himself “conceived the ideal, before the foundation of the world”—that body which is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, even Christ

And who set the members in their places? “God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.”

And let us turn again to Ephesians, chapter four. Of Christ, the risen and glorified Christ, it is written, “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

Yes, of the church it is said, “It is His body.” It was equally impossible for Calvin to add any member to that body, or to alter the position of any member which God had “added to the Lord.” All that he could rightly do would be to exhort the members to own the place in which God had set them, and do the work which He had assigned to them.

There can be no doubt that Calvin was truly a servant of God, but that he was attempting the right work when he bethought himself of “organizing the church,” is quite another matter. He failed to see that that which he desired to organize was the body of Christ Himself. He could see that the papist, who was doing penance for his sins, was attempting: to do that which Christ had already done. But he did not see that Christ had also done that work to which he now betook himself in the city of Geneva.

“It was needful,” he thought, “to bind together the souls that had been enlightened.”

Alas! it needed a far greater than Calvin to bind these souls together. It needed a work that was done 1500 years before, and in consequence of which, it was done completely and forever, by Him alone who could do it

We read that “Jesus died .... that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” And if we ask by what means He did this glorious work, let us find the answer in that same 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians. “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”

Thus are we brought “into the unity of the body of Christ, The Spirit gives union with (joins us to) all those here on earth who belong to God The believer is thus baptized into the one body. He is one spirit with the Lord,’ He is consequently one with all that are the Lord’s It is a body, one with Christ, and even called by His name, of which each and all of us are living members. ‘So also is Christ. ....’ Each member is a member of Christ, not of a, but of the church. In fact, there is no such thing in Scripture as a member of a churchThe Holy Ghost takes up all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and brings them into unity; (in other words, makes them one). This is the true account of the church, and no other; and the consequence is, therefore, that, no matter where it may be, it is always the body of Christ.”

But as to the Council of Berne, so also to John Calvin, these words in the 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians were vague and dim. And I have now to tell you of a sad and sorrowful time in the history of the city which God had so wonderfully delivered.

Calvin’s first step towards the accomplishment of his task was to write a confession of faith, to be signed by every inhabitant of Geneva. A part of this confession pledged each person to keep the ten commandments. And Farel himself, at Calvin’s desire, presented this confession to the council, in order that they might cause it to be signed by the citizens. The council agreed to this.

You will remember, in reading this, how Farel had written to Berthold Haller, telling him that the believer is not under the law. Nor had Farel ever thought of requiring from unbelievers that they would keep the ten commandments.

But he had a respect for Calvin which seems to have deprived him of the power of objecting to anything that Calvin did. He was fully persuaded that

by the side of this wonderful young man he was as nothing, and his own thoughts must give place at once to Calvin's thoughts, and his judgment to Calvin's.

It has been wisely said, that whilst the people of God are generally on their guard against their natural pride, they are seldom on their guard against their natural humility. And natural humility is just as much a fruit of the evil tree as natural pride, though it is a fault not so often found there. Where it is found, let us beware; it will lead us into many a snare and pitfall, for it will cause us to give up the truth of God, trusting to the superior wisdom or learning of one to whom perhaps that truth is less clearly shown. If it is our own opinion that we give up, it matters not; but if it is that which God has shown us, let us maintain it, should "an angel from Heaven" preach to us the contrary. Paul, who owned himself "the least of the Apostles," could yet withstand Peter to the face, "because he was to be blamed."

The citizens of Geneva were indignant at the order to sign Calvin's confession. Some said they would never promise to keep the ten commandments, for they could not keep such a promise if they made it. Anthony Saunier protested against the command to sign. But the council insisted. All who would not sign were to leave the city. Many refused to sign or to leave.

In the end of 1537 a second attempt was made to get these refractory persons to sign. But in vain.

And now those who were longing for liberty to drink and riot, to swear and to gamble, were loud in their outcries against Calvin and Farel. They formed themselves into a party of opposition, and were called the Libertines.

In 1538 matters were made worse by an order from Berne. Hitherto the gospellers of Geneva had kept no holy days except the Lord's day. They had used common bread at the Lord's Supper, and for baptism they had used any vessel of a convenient size. But now the Bernese council commanded that in Geneva and in the towns of the Pays de Vaud four festivals should be kept—Christmas, New Year's Day, Lady Day, and Ascension Day. Unleavened bread was to be used in the Lord's Supper, and stone fonts for baptism.

Farel had hitherto taught that if any Christian desired to observe such days as these, it must be left to his own conscience. He must impose it on no other person. And now that the command of Berne was given, the Libertines rose up in a body to require that these days should be kept in Geneva. They rejoiced in the thought of having religious excuses for drinking and feasting, dancing and rioting.

The Council of Geneva sent for Calvin and Farel, and desired them to conform to the decrees of Berne. But the preachers stood firm. And when the council again insisted that they should use unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper, they both replied that the citizens of Geneva were not in a fit state to be at the Lord's table at all. There was no Lord's Supper, therefore, the Sunday following.

Calvin and Farel both preached, though forbidden by the council to do so. They told the people why they could not consent to meet them at the table of the Lord.

The city was at once in a state of riot. The council sent for the preachers, and ordered them instantly to leave the city. "Well and good," replied Farel; "God has done it"

As they walked through the streets, the rioters followed them. Shouts rang on every side, “To the Rhone! to the Rhone!” just as in the old popish days six years before.

Thus was Farel banished from Protestant Geneva!

Geneva, which had been to him dearer than anything on earth besides— Geneva had become the rod of chastening in the Lord’s hand, and Farel was at the same time allowed the honour of suffering reproach and shame for that matter in which he was faithful to God.

You will remember how he had answered the monk at Aigle, “I have preached, and by the Word of God I will maintain it, that no living man has a right to order any other service of God, nor any other manner of serving Him, than that which He has Himself commanded. He has commanded us to do that only which He has Himself ordained, without adding to it, or taking from it, nor may we do that which is right in our own eyes. And if an angel from Heaven came to tell us to do any other thing than that which God has commanded, let him be accursed!”

Let us be thankful that rather than go back from this path of obedience to the living God, Farel was willing to go forth as an outcast from the city he loved, though to him it was as cutting off the right hand, or plucking out the right eye. But he could do it for His sake who was dearer to him than Geneva.

## *Chapter 71*

### A STRANGER AND A PILGRIM

**I**t was towards the end of April, 1538, that the two preachers were driven forth.

Were there none in Geneva who grieved for their departure? We are told that there were many. The work which God had done there was a real work. And the greater and more real the work, the greater will be the resistance of Satan.

For a time all appeared to be in ruins. And when the preachers were gone, Geneva, the gosseller's city, was for a while, as far as man could see, in the power of an enemy far more deadly and more powerful than the Duke of Savoy. All was in disorder—blasphemy and riot, drunkenness and strife, were on all sides. Farel said that the thought of Geneva was a burden to him which he must cast wholly upon the Lord. He determined to banish from his heart all remembrance of the terrible days he had gone through, and to look to Christ, only entreating Him to glorify Himself and to bring good and blessing out of the misery and ruin.

Of all that he had suffered — and many had been his sufferings, nothing had been so intensely painful to him as the ingratitude of those whom he loved so fervently. He wrote from time to time to the little flock, making no reference to his sufferings or to their conduct towards himself. He simply entreated them to humble themselves before God, that He might restore them and bless them.

After various wanderings, Farel and Calvin arrived wet and weary at the city of Basle. One of them had been nearly drowned in fording a river on the way there. Farel went to lodge with a printer. He felt for the first time in need of rest. But his rest was of short duration.

In the month of July his old friends at Neuchâtel wrote to him, entreating him to come and live amongst them. Their affectionate letters cheered and comforted him. But he could not consent to be the pastor of the little flock at Neuchâtel unless he were free to go elsewhere whenever the Lord should call him. This being promised him, he returned to the quiet little town, where he was warmly welcomed, and where he said but for the thought of Geneva he was truly happy.

And for the remainder of his long life, as far as he could be said to have a home, that home was Neuchâtel.

But the heart of man, whether at Geneva or at Neuchâtel, whether your heart or mine, is ever the same.

Both Calvin and Farel had rightly learnt from the Bible that the Lord has ordered needful discipline to be exercised in His Church. Not very long after Farel's return to Neuchâtel, a storm arose on this subject. A lady who had quarrelled with her husband, and refused to live with him, appeared at the Lord's table. Farel gave public notice that she could not be received there. Friends were not wanting who took the part of the lady, and very



soon many of the citizens determined that the matter should not rest till Farel was banished from the city. Farel was ready to go rather than allow dishonour to the name of Christ.

But this time those who cared for the glory of God were the stronger party. Farel remained, and the lady was declared to be no longer in communion with the people of God.

Meanwhile Calvin, after three years' banishment, had been recalled to Geneva.

There, we are told, "he set to work to frame, or rather to complete, the Genevan republic." He desired it to be "a reproduction of the Old Testament state of society," says his historian.

The history of Geneva has now ceased to be the history of Farel, and we may thus leave it, only referring to it further on one or two occasions.

In 1542 we find Farel at Metz, preaching to three thousand at a time in the churchyard of the Dominican monks. In vain the monks rang bells and raised riots. The voice of thunder rose above the din.

Just at this time the plague broke out at Metz. Many of the people fled, but for Farel it was a reason why he should remain. In the midst of sickness and death, insult and persecution, he laboured on.

One of his prayers at Metz has been written down by one who was present  
"Lord, thou knowest the cruelties which have been heaped upon Thy servants. We see the earth around us stained with blood, the dead bodies of Thy servants cast forth, fire and smoke rising to the Heavens, Thy people slaughtered on every side. But for all vengeance we entreat but one thing only— that Thy word should have free course, and that Satan should be confounded. Grant our prayer, O Lord! for what are our goods and our bodies in comparison with souls—and those souls which thou hast

redeemed—those souls which are, some of them, longing after Thee, though they know Thee but very little! Let none be owned, eternal Father, but Jesus, Thy Son, that mention may be made of none other, that nothing may be taught, or done, or said, or thought, otherwise than He has commanded and ordained.”

It was said in those days, no prayers were like the prayers of Farel. All who heard him felt that he was speaking to God, in the power of the Holy Ghost

We hear about this time of his being nearly strangled by a party of women, in the neighbourhood of Metz, and soon after attacked by a body of armed men, whilst breaking bread there with three hundred believers. On this occasion he was so severely wounded, that he had to be nursed for a while in Strasburg before he could move.

Next we hear of his arrival at Geneva, on a visit to Calvin.

Times were changed at Geneva. Calvin was not merely a preacher of the gospel, but he was fast becoming the ruler of the republic, honoured and obeyed by all the more orderly of the citizens.

Farel’s faded suit of clothes, torn and worn, told the tale of his hardships and poverty. The council ordered that a new suit should be given him.

But Farel desired to be independent of the council and the citizens. He would still be free to speak his mind to them, cost what it might. He refused the suit in a respectful manner.

It is pleasant to find Farel as of old, nothing more than “the shabby preacher,” sent forth, staff in hand, on the Lord’s errands, and depending upon Him alone. It was a higher place than to be “dictator of the republic of Geneva.”

Calvin kept the suit, and wrote afterwards to Farel that it was waiting at his house till someone could be found who would take it.

He would gladly have persuaded Farel to come back and settle in Geneva. But the Lord had clearly marked out another path for His servant—a path that was less noticeable to the eyes of men, and which left him in the shade, whilst Calvin was gaining for himself a name that should rank with that of Luther.

It was a very true friendship which Calvin had for Farel. Having failed to draw him back to Geneva, he hoped that the Council of Berne would make him a professor at Lausanne. He would then be near him, and in a post of honour.

But honours of this world were not for Farel. Berne looked coldly upon him; they remembered how he had resisted the decree as to the holidays, the fonts, and the bread.

Happily for Farel, he was left to go on his way, untrammelled by professorships or dignities, “the bondsman of the Lord Jesus Christ.” He said that the only title he desired was “preacher of the gospel of God.”

Years passed by, and Farel laboured on.

We hear of him at Montbeliard, again at Metz, and at Geneva, in Germany, and in various French towns near the borders of Germany and Switzerland.

At last, in 1553, when he was sixty-four years old, the tidings reached Geneva that Farel was dying at Neuchâtel.

Calvin, who so fervently loved him, hastened to his side; he stayed with him for a few days, and then he left him; he could not bear to see him die.

But the Lord answered the prayers of many of His people, and Farel recovered. In a little while he was preaching as before.

In the autumn of that year Calvin again sent to entreat his old friend to come to Geneva. It was on a sad and sorrowful occasion.

A Spaniard, called Servetus, had been for some years preaching, teaching, and writing many blasphemous errors. Amongst others, he taught that the Lord Jesus Christ is not Himself, God. Servetus led away many of the Libertines of Geneva. They were glad of an opportunity of contradicting and opposing Calvin, who had spoken strongly against the awful blasphemies of Servetus.

So far Calvin was acting as a faithful servant of God. But you will remember that Calvin's desire was to lead back Christians, in a great measure, to the place of the Jews in the Old Testament times. He desired Geneva to be "a reproduction of the Old Testament state of society."

He not only believed that God's people now should be placed under the law of the ten commandments, but also that the punishments of the law should be executed as in the days of Moses.

He was fully persuaded that heretics and blasphemers ought to be put to death, according to the commandment in Lev. xxiv.

It was not strange that Calvin should thus have mistaken the Lord's mind. He, as well as all other professing Christians, had been brought up in the belief that heresy was to be punished with death. It was one of the errors which had been taught for centuries by the church of Rome. If sins against man, such as murder, were thus to be punished, much more, said the teachers of Rome, ought men to be put to death who commit the greater offence of sin against God.

There was something which sounded well in this argument, nor can we rightly deny that sin against God is a deeper offence than sin against man.

But the Lord Jesus had foreseen that His people would draw the further conclusion that therefore heretics, professing Christianity, should suffer capital punishment. He had told His disciples that Satan should sow tares amongst the wheat, and that His servants would desire to root them up. But that His mind was, that both should grow together until the harvest. They were to leave them still to grow in the field (which is the world) until He should separate the tares Himself, and bind them in bundles to burn them. But the church which had turned away from the teaching of Christ, which had gone back to Jewish thoughts and ways, to altars and sacrifices, to priests and vestments, went back also from grace to the law, in the treatment of heretics and blasphemers.

They took upon themselves the burning of the tares. It is not for us to boast ourselves in this matter, as having on our part understood and obeyed the words of Christ. We, too, have misunderstood His parable, and have too often accustomed ourselves to think that He was warning His disciples against making any distinction in church fellowship between the believer and the unbeliever—between those sound in the faith, and those who teach and believe error— between those who live soberly, righteously, and godly, and those who are living to please themselves, in defiance of God's mind and will.

We, on our part, have made out the field to be not the world, but the church. For the priests of Rome then, and for the Protestants of England now, such verses as 2 Thess. iii. 14, 15, and Titus iii. 10, 11, would teach useful lessons.

To the priests, that to avoid and reject from Christian fellowship those whom we hope by this means to restore, is a very different thing from killing them.

To Protestants, that to receive such persons at the Lord's table, and into Christian fellowship, is an act of disobedience to Him who has told us in these cases to avoid and reject.

But Calvin had not unlearned all that Rome had taught him, nor in this matter had Farel either. Both one and the other fully believed that the Council of Geneva, who at last brought Servetus to trial, were right in condemning him to death.

The sentence pronounced upon him was that he should be burnt alive.

Strange to say, none has more gladly seized this opportunity of condemning Calvin, than the Roman Catholic historian who has written his life. We might suppose, in reading it, that to burn heretics was an atrocity which had never before entered the mind of any one professing Christianity, and had certainly found no parallel in the merciful acts of Rome.

Alas, we know the tale that history tells, and you will no doubt remember that within five years of the burning of Servetus hundreds of fires were lighted in the streets of England, kindled by the Roman priests!

And not only so, but these fires were kindled not to burn the tares, but the wheat; for the servants who had become deaf to the words of their Master, now called the tares wheat and the wheat tares.

Calvin was at least more merciful, if not more enlightened, than the Council of Geneva. He earnestly entreated that Servetus might be beheaded, instead of being burnt; but his request was refused.

And he then entreated Farel to come, to make one last effort to bring the wretched man to repentance.

Farel came. He visited Servetus in his prison, and entreated him to own Christ as his God. But it was in vain.

Farel then besought the council, as Calvin had done, that he might at least be put to death in a merciful manner. But the council again refused.

Farel had the horrible task of walking by the side of Servetus to the place of execution. In vain he spoke to him of the God he denied. Servetus clung to his error till he could speak no more. Farel returned sorrowfully to Neuchâtel. This happened in 1553.

The Libertines took occasion of the death of Servetus to raise a fresh complaint against Calvin.

This was unjust; for had Calvin never returned to Geneva the council would have taken the same course which they had now done with regard to the burning of Servetus. But it was easy to stir up against Calvin all those who hated him for those matters in which he was a faithful servant of God. Calvin was on the point of leaving the city.

Farel heard of the storm that was rising. He hastened again to Geneva, and preached in unsparing words of rebuke. He then returned to Neuchâtel as quickly as he had come.

The Council of Geneva was beset by the enraged leaders of the Libertines, and so far yielded to their demands, that Farel should be punished for his audacity, that they gave them a letter to the Council of Neuchâtel.

It was to require that their faithful pastor should be given up, and sent to Geneva for his trial. The Libertines hoped that he might be sentenced to death.

Calvin sent to warn Farel of the designs of his enemies. The old evangelist set off on foot, and in the midst of storm, wind, and rain, he appeared at Geneva, of his own accord, to answer for himself.

A scene followed which must have brought back to his mind his first visit to Geneva more than twenty years before. Again he found himself in the

midst of a crowd of enemies, furious and bitter as the priests in the council chamber of the popish vicar.

Again he was deafened by their yells and shouts of vengeance.

“To the Rhone!” sounded from all sides of the council-room. And chief amongst his enemies was Ami Perrin, the same who had gone years before to the vicar’s house, to defy him to contradict the sermons of Anthony Froment.

Of him Farel said that he was the pillar of the taverns.

It is well for us to bear in mind such men as Ami Perrin. It is easy to be a zealous Protestant, whilst the heart is filled with enmity to God. There is enough in popery to rouse up the natural resistance of the heart to all restraint and tyranny. But, the heart of man hates the restraint of the Word of God and the authority of Christ, more than any restraint on the part of man. Had Farel been nothing more than a Protestant, he might have been the hero of Protestant Geneva. But it was the reproach and rejection of Christ that he was called to share, and the world, whether Popish or Protestant, who rejected the Master, must needs reject the servant also.

Still there was a remnant even in Geneva; there were those who had believed the gospel he had preached to them, and who loved him fervently. One after another gathered round him, and dared his enemies to touch a hair of his head.

The old man was allowed to speak in his own defence. There was a power in his words that reached the hearts even of his enemies, of Ami Perrin amongst the rest. The council listened to him with respect and awe.

When he had done speaking, the larger number of the council declared him innocent of all charges brought against him. They said he had only



acted as a faithful servant of God, and they accepted his reproofs and warnings.

Ami Perrin owned that Farel was in the right.

All then gave him their hands, as a sign of reconciliation, and they invited him to dine with the citizens in public, as a token of friendship, before he left the city.

After this better days dawned for Geneva. The light and the darkness had been in deadly conflict there, but the light so far prevailed that Geneva became a bright spot amidst the thick fogs and shadows of Christendom.

You may remember how just after this, the gospellers' city became a refuge for the many persecuted saints who fled from England and Scotland during the reign of Mary. It was there that many of them were cheered and refreshed, and when better times came for England they returned with fuller light and clearer thoughts of the gospel of the grace of God. Farel had learnt to know many of them, and had much happy fellowship with them, and with many also who had fled from his own country. The name of Geneva was henceforward to stand in honourable contrast with the name of Rome.

## *Chapter 72*

### SEVEN EVENTFUL YEARS

**T**he next remarkable event in Farel's history is one you would least expect to hear of. At the age of sixty-nine he married one of his country-women, who had fled from France and taken refuge at Neuchâtel. Her name was Mary Torel.

She and her widowed mother had been living at Neuchâtel for some years, and old Madame Torel had kept house for Farel. Mary was a staid and pious young woman, and she seems to have made a good wife to her elderly husband.

Five or six years after their marriage they had a little son, who was called John. No doubt he was called after Calvin.

Calvin, however, was by no means pleased when he heard of Farel's marriage. He said he was dumb with astonishment. He was not as dumb as he might have been, for he made several severe remarks on the subject, and considered that Farel needed much pity for his youthful folly.

But Farel's marriage was to be no obstacle to his taking the Lord's message whithersoever he was sent

It was in the autumn of 1558 that we hear of his wedding; in 1560, or '61, we find him setting off on a perilous journey.

For nearly forty years he had been labouring day and night amongst the mountains and the valleys of Switzerland; he had seen the whole of French Switzerland, with the exception of some few villages, turned from idols to the living God.

But in all his work and all his sufferings, he had never forgotten his old home on the French Alps. Since the time when he had preached there as a young man, after the happy days at Meaux, many who had heard him had been diligent in making known the Gospel of God. And the Bibles he had sent amongst the French villages, by means of colporteurs, had not been read in vain.

In the year 1560 some of the people of Gap arrived at Neuchâtel, and entreated him to come amongst them once more.

The old man set off, with a Bible and a staff, and was soon preaching by the hillsides, in the mills and fields, and in the streets and markets.

Having preached for a while in the market place of Gap, he was entreated to preach in a large chapel. Very soon, however, an edict was passed by the French Government, forbidding all such preaching except in private houses. But as the chapel was the only place capable of containing the crowds who came to hear, Farel preached there still.

An order was sent to the king's proctor at Gap to seize the heretic preacher. But the proctor had himself believed the blessed tidings of the love of God, and he would not lay hands upon Farel. Another proctor was sent, and with a company of officers and many armed sergeants he proceeded to the "Chapel of the Holy Dove." The sergeants knocked loudly at the door, which was shut and locked. As no one opened it, they forced it

in, and found the chapel crowded from end to end. But every eye remained fixed upon the preacher. No one moved, and Farel preached on. The sergeants made their way through the crowd, rushed upon the pulpit, and seized the preacher “with the crime in his hand.”

“The crime” was the Bible.

He was carried off, and locked up in a dark dungeon. By what means the gossellers succeeded in rescuing him from his prison, I cannot tell you; but by some means or another he was carried off by them in the course of the night. They took him through the dark streets to the ramparts, and like one of old “he was let down the wall in a basket.”

Other gossellers were waiting to receive him, and they conducted him safely back to Neuchâtel.

But the next year we find him again amongst the hills of Dauphiné. Another edict had been passed, allowing the gossellers to meet in the open air, provided the king’s officers were allowed to be present.

Just as in the old times the village people had flocked to the holy cross on the hill at Tallard, so now they came from far and near to hear of Him who hung upon the Cross of Calvary to put away their sins.

And amongst them came none other than the old Bishop of Gap. We are told by a priest who wrote the story of those days how this old man rose up when the sermon was over, and cast upon the ground the mitre he had worn, and the crosier he had carried, for five and thirty years. He trod them under his feet, and said he would follow the Lord Jesus with William Farel.

Very soon was he put to the test. Terrible massacres of the gossellers had begun in the neighbourhood of Gap. The little flock of believers met together, and decided to leave their homes and fly to a place of safety.

They set out, four hundred in number. At the head of the band marched the two old men, William Farel, and Gabriel de Clermont, once Bishop of Gap.

But the seed which had been sown sprang up when the gossellers were gone; and from that day to this, the light has never been extinguished in Farel's beloved Dauphiné.

When he returned to Neuchâtel, Christopher Fabri, who had for some time been his fellow-labourer there, went to Dauphiné with Peter Viret. There they preached and taught, and went on as far as Lyons. They thought it a good opportunity, for the plague was raging there, and many of the sick and dying were ready to hear the blessed news of the Saviour of sinners.

"Neither life, nor wife, nor children," wrote Christopher Fabri, "are so dear to me as my Lord Jesus and His Church."

Meanwhile Farel's labours had never ceased; but those of John Calvin were drawing to a close.

In the spring of 1564 a letter was brought to Farel from his beloved friend John Calvin.

"Farewell," wrote Calvin, "farewell, my best and truest brother! Since it is the Lord's will you should live when I am gone, never forget our friendship, which, so far as it has been useful to the Church of God, will bear fruit in eternity. Do not, I entreat, weary yourself by coming to see me. I breathe with difficulty, and I expect every moment to depart hence. I am well satisfied that I live and die in Christ. To you and the brethren, once more farewell!"

Farel set off at once for Geneva: he found Calvin still alive. Once more they spoke together of the Lord whom they loved; and a few days later Calvin was absent from the body and present with the Lord.

Farel's task, too, was nearly done. He was now seventy-five years old. His ceaseless labours might have worn out many a stronger man. But till his Master called him hence he would work on.

When Calvin was gone, Farel set out on his last journey to Metz. It was still at the peril of his life that he went there "to sow his tares," as said the bishop: but he was fearless as ever.

And his preaching at Metz was with a power and freshness that cheered and stirred up the persecuted flock.

After one of these sermons he sank down exhausted. It was as much as his friends could do to carry him back to Neuchâtel.

There he lay for some time, too weak to move. But his room was thronged with those who loved him for his work's sake, and who came once more to look on his beloved face and to hear his last words.

On September 13th, 1565, he passed away into the presence of his Lord. It was fifteen months after the death of Calvin, and he was about seventy-six years old.

He was buried in the churchyard of Neuchâtel; but his grave is now unknown, except to Him who will ere long call him forth to meet Him in the air.

Those who visited him in this last illness had had a foretaste of Heaven, which they could never forget. Christ had been magnified in his body, both by life and by death.

"Those who saw him," we are told, "went away glorifying God."

He had given directions that his body should be laid in the churchyard, "until that God shall call it forth from the corruption here below, and bring it alive into the glory of Heaven." There was great mourning for "Father Farel."

His beloved Christopher Fabri remained at Neuchâtel to care for the flock that had been so dear to him. Little John Farel died two years after his father.

Thus do we end our story of one who sought no higher honour here below than to be a workman “approved of God,” who desired no other joy than that the Lord Jesus Christ should be glorified.

“It is not,” he said, “the wealth, and the honour, and the pleasure of this world that are set before us, but to serve the Lord, and that alone.”

And according to his faith, so was it to William Farel. He had the love of those to whom Christ was dear, but besides that, his reward here below was reproach and shame, insult and hatred, suffering and toil.

And whilst the names of Luther and Calvin are everywhere spoken, and their history everywhere told, there are comparatively few who have heard of the fifty years’ labour of William Farel. Few men, perhaps, have been, in proportion to their work, so speedily forgotten. Whilst Luther’s books are everywhere to be had, the few writings of William Farel are almost unknown.

There may be, perhaps, one reason for this which we little like to own. But is it not true that the message with which Farel was sent, is one from which the heart of man will shrink, not only in popish countries but in Protestant countries also?

“Let none be astonished if I cannot endure that any should mix up Jesus Christ and His gospel with ceremonies not commanded by God—that any should preach that those things should be believed and done which are not in the gospel nor of the gospel—if I will not endure that any should seek for salvation or grace in things here below, and not in Jesus Christ alone. Who

can justly condemn me in this, that I say there is no other gospel, no other glad tidings of salvation, but in Jesus only?

“Therefore, when those great fathers of old times spake otherwise, and if even the angels of Heaven came to speak of another gospel, can I not always say with Paul, “Let them be accursed!”

“Jesus Christ and His gospel! Are these human things, with which men’s inventions may be mixed up? May men add to them what seems in their eyes fair and good?

“I am well assured that the liberty such men take, to make and keep human observances in the Church of God, is not a liberty which comes from Jesus Christ, but a liberty forged upon the anvil of hell.

“It is a liberty which sets us free from the obedience and service of Jesus Christ, to make us slaves of Satan and of iniquity. Shall we not rather be the bondsmen of God, and set free from everything which Jesus Christ has not commanded, and which His Word does not contain, that He and His blessed gospel may reign in our hearts alone? May the Lord, by His grace, give to us all an honest heart and a true sense of what is due to Him, and an intelligence as clear, and a gift of the Spirit as excellent, as He gave to His holy apostle Paul; that we may thus be hindered from mixing up, or holding, or keeping in the Church of Jesus Christ anything that He has not commanded . . . admitting by holy discipline that which ought to be admitted, rejecting that which ought to be rejected; so that nothing be said or done that is not simply and purely according to the Word of God, by which alone all should be ordered and governed!

“And may that Word alone be the authority for the Church, neither added to nor diminished, nothing changed, nothing altered, from that which we find therein!”



May you and I, having believed in Jesus, having known Him as the One who has saved us fully, perfectly, and eternally, from sin and condemnation, having known Him as the One ascended into the glory and dwelling in His Church by the Spirit, thus obey Him in simplicity and truth. If the story of this servant of the Lord should be the means in these last days of leading but one soul to know and follow the Great Shepherd of the sheep, it will be but carrying on the work in which William Farel found his joy; and he being dead, may thus even yet speak for his Master.

“Not,” as he said, “that I might have disciples who follow my teaching, and of whom I am the leader (I leave this to Francis and to Dominick), but that some might with me be disciples of Jesus and of Him crucified ... that some might bear the cross after Him, that some might own Him as their Lord.

“There is not a man upon the earth,” he adds,” nor is there an angel in Heaven, who can truthfully say that I have drawn disciples to myself and not to Jesus.”

And thus did God set upon His servant the signal mark of honour, that there has never been a Farelite.

He sought not to gather men to any person or thing here below, but to Christ in Heaven.

“If we know Him,” he wrote,” we must know Him where He is, in Heaven, at the Father’s right hand.”

And to Him alone would he direct all eyes and all hearts. “Faith,” he said, “turns to none but God alone. Faith stands on no ground but God only. Faith can receive nothing but that which is from God. All is nothing to faith, excepting God only. Nothing is sweet to faith but God and His voice.”

And now we take leave of him to whom that voice was so sweet and so well known, and who soon, at the sound of that voice, shall rise from the churchyard of Neuchâtel to be forever with the Lord.

May you meet him in that glory, having known, as he knew, by God's grace and goodness, "the power and value of the death of Christ?"

***The Evangelist***

*"From the brightness of the glory,*

*"Go ye forth," He said—*

*"Heal the sick, and cleanse the lepers,*

*Raise the dead.*

*Freely give I thee the treasure,*

*Freely give the same;*

*Take no store of gold or silver,*

*Take My Name.*

*"Carry neither scrip nor raiment,*

*Neither shoes nor staves;*

*Walk unburdened through the desert.*

*O'er the waves.*

*Thou art fitted for the journey,*

*How so long it be,*

*Thou shall come unworn, unwearied,*

*Back to Me.*

*"Thou shalt tell Me in the glory*

*All that thou hast done, (Mark vi 30.)*

*Setting forth alone, returning*

*Not alone.  
Thou shalt bring the ransomed with thee.  
They with songs shall come,  
As the golden sheaves of harvest  
Gathered home.”  
Then I went, as He had told me.  
He, the Lord in Heaven;  
Went in power of the Spirit  
He had given.  
And the sick arose rejoicing.  
Bore away their bed;  
And in might of life eternal  
Rose the dead.  
And a light beyond the sunlight  
Did the blind man see;  
Loud and sweet the dumb sang praises,  
Lord, to Thee;  
And the leper, from his exile,  
Came Thy grace to own,  
Falling low in rapturous worship  
At the throne,  
Where He sitteth working wonders.  
High at God’s right hand,  
More than when an outcast stranger  
In the land.  
From the throne in Heaven speaks He,  
Speaks, and it is done;*

*Thus does God delight to honour  
Christ, His Son.  
Thus with instruments of music  
Do His servants stand,  
Harp and lute the King has fashioned  
With His hand. (2 Chron. vii. 6.)  
And “the music of Jehovah”  
Sounds from every chord;  
He who makes that glorious music  
Is the Lord.  
He by them tells forth God’s praises  
To the ears of men,  
And to God His praise ascendeth  
Yet again; He alone the Mighty Preacher,  
Gathering in His own,  
And the praise to God returning,  
His alone.*

The End

OCR performed by

Thomas Witte