

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>



REV. CHAS. T. BYFORD.

[Frontispiece.]

PEASANTS AND PROPHETS

(Baptist Pioneers in Russia
and South Eastern Europe)

BY

REV. CHAS. T. BYFORD

CONTINENTAL COMMISSIONER OF THE
BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE

SECOND EDITION

London

JAMES CLARKE & Co.,
13 and 14, Fleet Street, E.C.

THE KINGSGATE PRESS,
4, Southampton Row, W.C.

Foreword

INTEREST in the rapidly developing Baptist work in Russia and South Eastern Europe has led to repeated requests from friends for further information as to the march of events, and some details concerning the lives of men who are, under God, working in the forefront of this great evangelical revival.

For years it has been the privilege of the author to count the men here written of as his personal friends. He has travelled with them in all manner of conveyances, shared their pleasures and hardships, and seen at first hand their successful labours. Many of these sketches first appeared in the

Foreword

Baptist Times and Freeman, and are now reprinted in volume form by the courtesy of the Editor of that journal; some are now published for the first time. As the readers come into contact with these heroes, our earnest prayer is that the blessing wherewith God is blessing these pioneers may be theirs also.

North Finchley,
August, 1911.

Preface to Second Edition

IN issuing a second edition of this little book, the author has added several fresh sketches and photographs, and has made a few necessary corrections of errors in the previous issue.

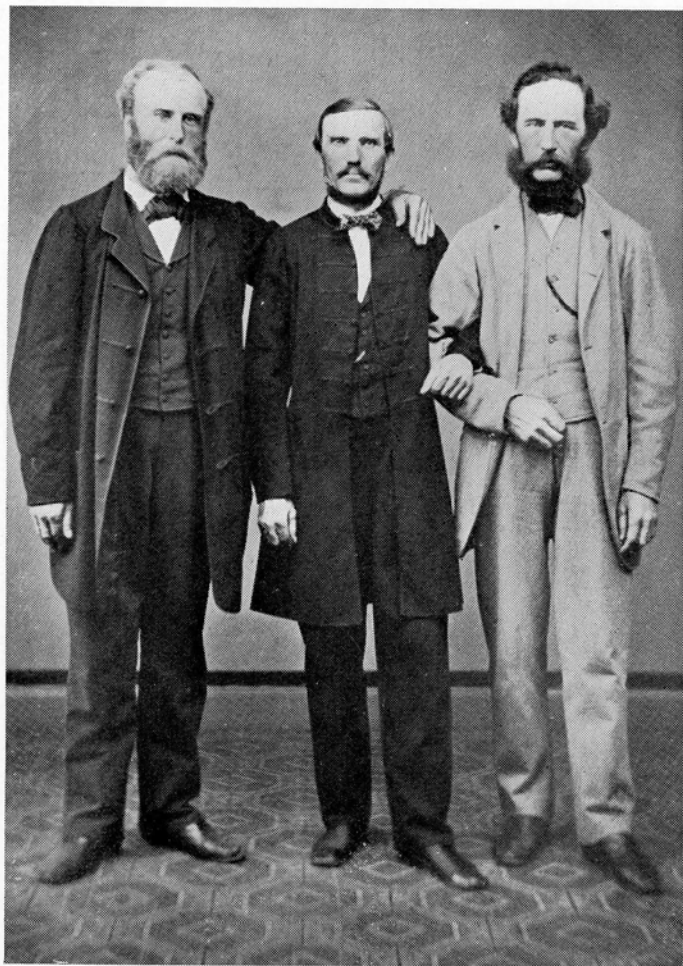
October, 1912.

Contents

	PAGE
FOREWORD	v.
PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION	vii.
BAPTIST PIONEERS IN HUNGARY	1
A HUNGARIAN APOSTLE	10
THE LAND OF JOHN HUS	15
MORAVIA	26
BAPTISTS IN THE BALKANS	33
THE ANCIENT CAPITAL OF BULGARIA: TIRNOVO	43
JACOB KLUNDT, EXILE AND PRISONER	49
SOUTH OF THE CARPATHIANS	55
THE ROMANCE OF BAPTIST WORK IN ROUMANIA	60
BAPTIST STRUGGLES IN SERVIA	67
THE BAPTIST HOSTS IN RUSSIA	73
PERILS AND PERSECUTIONS	82
PAVLOFF THE PIONEER	88
AN EARLY PIONEER	95
A RUSSIAN BAPTIST LEADER	99
VASILIA IVANOVITCH IVANOFF	104
FEODOR THE COSSACK	109
SAINTS IN SIBERIA	121
PODIN AND THE PRISONERS	126
THE HISTORY OF A HERO	135
THE TRIUMPH OF FAITH	139
RELIGIOUS LIBERTY (?) IN RUSSIA	142
"THE SESSION OF THE HERETICS"	149

List of Illustrations

	FACING PAGE
REV. CHAS. T. BYFORD	<i>Frontispiece</i>
THE FIRST BAPTISTS IN HUNGARY	1
J. AND MRS. ROTTMAYER	10
A. UDVARNOKI	10
M. KORNYA	14
M. TOTH	14
H. NOVOTNY	24
J. NOVOTNY	24
N. F. CAPEK	28
P. DOYCHEFF	43
BERG SCHLIPP	43
VILLAGE OF VERDI SCAVO	55
CONFISCATED CHAPEL, BELGRADE	67
THE KONAK, BELGRADE	69
EVANGELICAL BAPTISTS, ST. PETERSBURG	73
FOUNDATION STONE-LAYING, ST. PETERSBURG	82
SISTERS CLAUDIA AND MARY	92
V. PAVLOFF	95
S. STEPANOFF	95
V. I. IVANOFF	109
F. P. KOSTROMIN	109
A. ERSERATENKO	126
A. K. PODIN	126



THE THREE FIRST HUNGARIAN CONVERTS BAPTISED.
MARSCHALL, ROTTMAYER (Senior), WAYKE.

[To face p. 1.]

PEASANTS AND PROPHETS

Baptist Pioneers in Hungary

DOWN in Kolozsvár, the ancient capital of Transylvania, the birthplace of Matthias, the first king of Hungary, there lives in retirement upon his little farmstead one of the first Baptist pioneers throughout South Eastern Europe, one who is a direct link with the earliest attempts to found a Baptist Church in the Austrian Empire.

His father, Johann Rottmayer, senior, was born in Budapest in the year 1817, and was the youngest son of a poor shoemaker. Early in life he was bereft of his father, and his widowed mother had a terrific struggle to feed and clothe her little children. After four years' schooling, the

Peasants and Prophets

lad was apprenticed to a carpenter in the city, and upon reaching his majority, he began to tramp through Europe in search of work. Thus he passed through Vienna, where he obtained employment for a few months, and subsequently laboured in Saxony, Dresden, and Berlin; and upon the news reaching the latter city that Hamburg was in flames, young Rottmayer made his way to the growing port in search of employment to be obtained in the rebuilding of the city. In the providence of God the carpenter obtained work under a godly employer, by name Heinrich, who gradually led his artisan to the feet of Jesus Christ. Before his conversion Rottmayer had never seen a Bible, but now the book became one of his most treasured possessions. He was brought into touch with the saintly J. G. Oncken, and was baptised by him, subsequently joining the church in Hamburg. Five other Hungarians joined the fellowship at the same time, and in the

Baptist Pioneers in Hungary

year 1847, J. G. Oncken sent them back to their own land as pioneer preachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Associated with Johann Rottmayer were the brethren Johann Woyka, Josef Marschall, Karl Scharschmidt, Anton Hornung, and Andreas Tiveley. In 1848 the little band was reinforced by the coming of three other brethren—Lorders, Kuse, and Friedrich Oncken. In the following year, through the liberality of Mr. J. G. Oncken, and a grant from the Hamburg Tract Society, the first tracts in the Hungarian language were printed in Budapest and circulated throughout the country. For years these men laboured in the homeland, they suffered severe persecutions, and triumphed over great difficulties; as a result, it was not until 1865 that there were any baptisms in the land. In that memorable year the Rev. G. W. Lehmann, an elder of the Baptist Church in Berlin, came down to Budapest and baptised six candidates in the "Blue"

Peasants and Prophets

Danube, one of the men being Johann Rottmayer, junior, son of the pioneer carpenter preacher to Hungary. In a few years all these brethren were dispersed by persecution and death, and the infant church was defunct. In 1886 Johann Rottmayer, junior, accepted service under the British and Foreign Bible Society, and was for twenty-eight years their agent in Transylvania, travelling throughout the land selling Bibles and preaching the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ.

In the year 1870 Heinrich Meyer settled in Budapest as an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and after the lapse of a few years, the first Budapest Church was founded again. Anton Novak, with his wife, were early brought to the Lord, and through these two devoted friends the Gospel spread in a marvellous manner throughout the Bekes Csaba and Nagyszalonta district, the whole of Central Hungary being affected by the new movement.

Baptist Pioneers in Hungary

Johann Rottmayer, junior, was born at Budapest the year following that in which his father was sent back to Hungary by J. G. Oncken. He was greatly favoured in his early days in that both his parents were pious and devoted followers of the Lord Jesus, and the home-life was saturated with a spirit of praise and prayer.

In the year 1867 young Rottmayer attended the "Bundesconference" in Hamburg, and there, in the Böhlmstrasse Chapel, he heard with great delight the late Rev. C. H. Spurgeon preach on several occasions. He says that the sermons "made a profound impression upon him; a new world was opened before his eyes." Added to the influence of the sermons was the fellowship of the brethren in the two great churches. Here he realised that the Baptists were not a mere handful of believers in Hungary, but a great company scattered throughout the whole world. He remained for fifteen months in Hamburg,

Peasants and Prophets

and from thence went to Berlin for ten months. In the latter city he was brought into touch with the pioneers of the faith in Germany, and was fortunate in having amongst his friends Mr. J. G. Lehmann, of Cassel, whose name is fragrant in all our churches as a brother beloved in the Lord.

Whilst in Berlin our friend engaged in Sunday-school work, and was an acceptable preacher in the city and surrounding districts, until at last he was asked by J. G. Oncken to do pioneer work in Holstein and the Hartz Mountains.

Under the laws of Hungary he was called as a conscript to serve two years in the army, and during his service he was stationed in the garrison towns of the Adriatic. His military service finished, he became a colporteur under the British and Foreign Bible Society, attached to the dépôt in Vienna, under the direction of the saintly and gifted Edward Millard.

As an agent of the Bible Society he

Baptist Pioneers in Hungary

travelled through Bohemia, Poland, Hungary, Bosnia, and the Balkan States, selling and preaching the Word of God. Only those who have travelled off the beaten track in these lands can realise the manifold hardships through which a colporteur of the Bible Societies must pass.

Johann Rottmayer was the founder of the Baptist Church in Vienna, the meetings being held in a private room. News of the gatherings came to the ears of the police authorities; the friends were forbidden to sing or to pray. Notwithstanding these prohibitions, the brethren continued to meet for worship, and the church exists to-day under the pastoral supervision of the Rev. H. Steiger. Attempts to organise a Sunday-school were made, but the friends were hindered in making any forward movement by the hostility of the police and the priests of the Roman Catholic Church. Owing to his persistency in preaching the Gospel and holding meetings for worship,

Peasants and Prophets

Rottmayer was taken before the magistrates and fined twenty kronen for each offence. Fines and imprisonment only spurred him on to more strenuous efforts for the spread of the Gospel in the Austrian Empire.

In 1906, after thirty-eight years' faithful labour on behalf of the Bible Society, Rottmayer resigned his post, and retired to his farm at Kolozsvar, there to spend the evening of his days. In his semi-retirement he has proved to be a tower of strength to the churches in Transylvania, frequently visiting the brethren and preaching for them, and on several occasions he has undertaken long journeys to Bulgaria and Roumania, there to help and inspire the brave pioneers who are labouring in these far-away lands. His heart still burns with a holy passion for souls, and his chief delight is still to be found in proclaiming the Eternal Gospel amongst the many and diverse races to be found in Hungary and the Balkan States. It has been my privilege to be a guest in his

Baptist Pioneers in Hungary

charming home, to undertake long journeys in his company, to hear him sound forth the message of the Cross, to meet with other members of his family, to listen to his fascinating stories of early struggles and trials, and my intimate knowledge of the man and his dear wife has deepened my love and respect for him. He is one of the chosen instruments of God for the redemption of Hungary and the Hungarian peoples.

A Hungarian Apostle

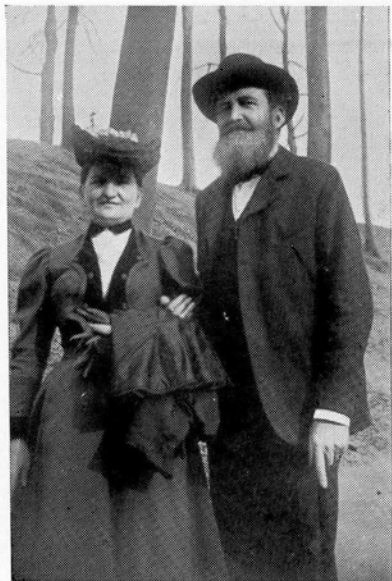
THE rapid advance of the Baptist churches in Hungary is in no little measure due to the men whom Heinrich Meyer gathered around him during the first twenty years of his ministry—men like Mihaly Kornya, Mihaly Toth, Lajos Balogh, Gyorgy Gerwich, and the subject of our sketch, Andreas Udvarnoki, the minister of the Budapest III. Church.

Andreas Udvarnoki was born at Szada, in the province of Pest, Hungary, on November 16, 1865. The son of God-fearing parents, his early training was in connection with the Reformed Calvinistic Church. At sixteen years of age he heard for the first time an itinerant Baptist preacher, with the result that he was not only led to surrender his life to Jesus



ANDREAS UDVARNOKI.

To face p. 10]



JOHANN AND MRS. ROTTMAYER.

A Hungarian Apostle

Christ, but was subsequently immersed. He immediately began to study the Holy Scriptures, and as opportunity offered he visited the surrounding villages to preach the Gospel. In the year 1882 he was brought into contact with Heinrich Meyer, under whose guidance he laboured in the Gospel.

Six years later he applied for admission to the Baptist College in Hamburg, and for four years he pursued his studies in the premier Baptist Preachers' School on the Continent. His course in the seminary ended, he returned to Hungary, and became the pastor of the Church at Totfalu.

After a year of much blessing in his pastorate there, he removed to the Church at Orszentnuklos, where he met and married his wife, a splendid helper in the Lord, a saintly woman, and a true helpmate.

The work in these two small churches was but preparatory to his entering upon the most difficult task in the whole kingdom. Amongst the members of the Budapest First

Peasants and Prophets

Church (German) were seven Magyar brethren who were desirous of being formed into a church of their own nationality and language. After many difficulties, they received permission to form themselves into the First Magyar Church, and, muchly daring, invited Andreas Udvarnoki to be their first minister. Without buildings of any kind, with no great organisation at their back, with less than a living wage, husband and wife accepted the call as from the Lord, and removed to the capital, there to devote themselves to the work of the Lord amongst the teeming masses of the city. From the very beginning the work was greatly blessed, souls were saved, believers were baptised, the church was added to daily, premises secured, and the foundations of the strongest church in Hungary were laid. Gradually the work spread to the surrounding villages and towns, where stations and churches were formed. Since 1895, when the church was gathered, twenty-eight mis-

A Hungarian Apostle

sion stations have been established in no less than six counties.

To-day there are nine hundred and fourteen members, besides those who have been dismissed to form other churches in the stronger stations. The growth of the work brought its own peculiar difficulties, not the least being that some of the larger missions were clamouring for a settled pastor and regular instruction in the Word of God, whilst on the other hand there were numbers of young men anxious and ready to devote themselves to the ministry.

At last the pressure was so great that in 1905 Andreas Udvarnoki started a preachers' school in two rooms adjoining his own house. Eight brethren were selected out of the numerous applicants, and the work of the school commenced.

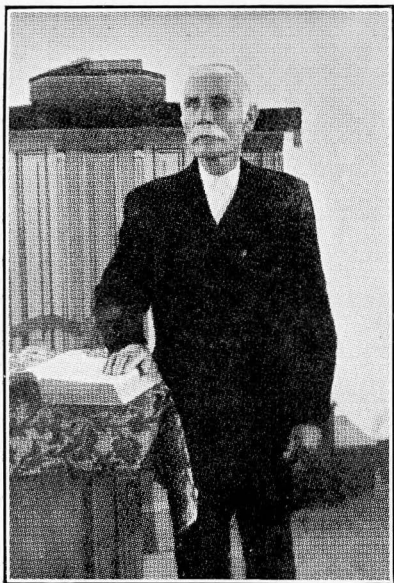
The two rooms are altogether inadequate for the purposes to which they are devoted, for they are used as dormitories, refectory, and class-rooms, whilst a printer's case in

Peasants and Prophets

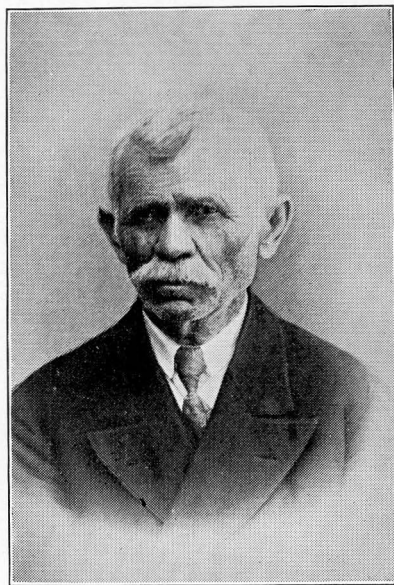
the corner contains the material wherewith one of the brethren sets type for the new hymn-book being published for this progressive congregation.

Udvarnoki taught theology and homiletics, and helped in the other classes, teaching in the school three hours daily, and this in addition to his pastoral work, visiting his many stations, and preaching four times weekly.

His is a busy life; the days are full of toil, the task is a prodigious one, and oft-times he would be released from his labours, but the spirit of the man can be discerned in a sentence recently uttered when talking over these matters and the proposal of the Baptist World Alliance to found a Bible School for Eastern and South Eastern Europe: "Until that day arrives I must hold fast to my post. I am a soldier under the command of the 'Great Commander-in-Chief,' and His orders must be obeyed until He gives the signal to stand at ease."



MIHALY TOTH.



MIHALY KORNYA.

[To face p. 14.]

The Land of John Hus

BOHEMIA, "the cradle of the Reformation," is to-day one of the last great strongholds of the Papacy. Here Rome still exercises her old intolerance. Five centuries ago John Hus was done to death by prelates and priests. Jesuits completed the work of stamping out heresy by destroying 30,000 heretic Bibles, and to-day the same spirit is paramount in the land. Our Baptist brethren can only meet for family worship. Sunday-schools are forbidden; the distribution of the Bible is prohibited; to distribute tracts is to transgress the law. Baptisms are illegal, and only within the last few years shots from the rifles of the gendarmes have whistled past the ears of the brethren whilst met together by the banks of a river to immerse believers

Peasants and Prophets

upon profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. In defiance of the law, in spite of every difficulty, there are now twelve preaching places in Bohemia, an average of 1,500 meetings per annum, the sale of more than 1,000 copies of the New Testament every year, the distribution of many thousands of Gospel tracts all over the land, and many baptisms. The church to-day numbers 230 believers, scattered in many different places, and nearly all of them gathered by the self-denying and apostolic ministry of one man, helped by his gifted son and daughters.

Henry Novotny, a pure Czech, was born in Bohemia in the year 1846. A devout Roman Catholic until his twentieth year, he was then brought under the influence of the Presbyterian mission in Prague. After his conversion he became a member of the church, and within a few months heard the call to preach the Gospel to his fellow-countrymen. To this end he proceeded to

The Land of John Hus

Basle, in Switzerland, where he spent four years in the Presbyterian College, afterwards entering the Free Church College in Edinburgh. On his return home he became the minister of the Free Reformed Church in Prague, but gradually there came to him the conviction that baptism by immersion upon profession of faith in the Lord Jesus was the Scriptural method of the ordinance. At last the step had to be taken; he resigned his church, and in 1885 Henry Novotny journeyed to Lodz (in Poland) and was there baptised by the Rev. Charles Ondra. Returning to Prague, our brother began to preach and to influence people until sixteen were baptised and the church was constituted. Gradually the work has spread until in more than thirty towns there are now members of the Baptist Church in Bohemia.

Despite the many drawbacks connected with pioneering work in a bitterly hostile land, the insufficiency of funds to carry on

Peasants and Prophets

the work over a large area, the poverty of the workers, our brother has been signally blessed, and only recently has baptised a famous actress from the National Theatre in Prague, and a brilliant young nobleman, a graduate in "honours" of the University.

Many of those baptised by Mr. Novotny are now in the United States and Canada, seeking in those freer lands to serve their God and Saviour in liberty and peace.

Under the present Austrian law, children of Roman Catholics, or even of those who have not officially declared their secession from the Roman Catholic Church, are absolutely forbidden to enter Protestant places of worship, or to attend the Sunday-schools connected with such places. If a child is discovered attending Protestant meetings, the priest has the right to enter the public school for the purpose of punishing the little one, whilst the Sunday-school teacher renders himself or herself liable to proceedings before the Court of Justice.

The Land of John Hus

Nevertheless, almost every Sunday, children are to be found in our Baptist Sunday-schools, brought there by their little friends. Joseph Novotny remembers upon one occasion, whilst he was a scholar in his father's school, a little Catholic lad came into the meeting, and on the following day he showed his hands covered with blue bruises, inflicted upon him by the parish priest as a punishment for meeting with the heretics.

Mrs. Čápek, wife of the minister at Brünn, was on one occasion visiting a sick woman in the city of Prague. During her call she tried to point the invalid to Him who healed all our diseases, when she was startled to hear the old woman say, "Oh, I know the story already. Look! here is my Bible; I read in it every day." For a Roman Catholic to have a Bible was a matter for astonishment to the visitor, as Bibles are forbidden to the laity in Roman Catholic lands.

"Tell me, how did you become possessed of the book?"

Peasants and Prophets

“It is a long story,” replied the sick woman. “Seven years ago I had two boys, but, unfortunately, they were not good sons to me, especially the older one. He took away every penny from me, and used to spend his all in the wine-shop. One day I noticed a change in him. I did not know by whom or how it came about; all I know is that he used to attend certain meetings, and that he learned there to pray, to sing, and one day he brought home this book. Every day he used to read and study it; he forsook the public-house; he was quite changed. My neighbours noticed the difference in him, and were not slow to congratulate me. At that time I could not read the Bible, and so he used to read to me aloud. Shortly afterwards he became seriously ill, too ill to attend the meetings. He knew that death was approaching, but he feared not. During those last days he used to say verses from the book, and even tried to sing.

“After his death his younger brother

The Land of John Hus

began to read the Bible, and then to attend the meetings of the Baptists. This came to the ears of the priest; the boy was beaten before the whole school, as an example to his fellow-pupils not to attend the meetings of the heretics. He was afterwards imprisoned in a cupboard for one whole night, and even then would not promise not to go to the heretics again. At last the priest, finding that the lad was obdurate, entirely lost control of himself, and in his fury lifted him up by the waist and threw him against the stove—threw him so violently that several of his ribs were broken. In a few days the little disciple of Christ was called to be with Him whom he had learned to love.

“He died,” said the old mother with tears in her eyes, “with this book clasped in his little hands, with peace in his heart, asking me to love and serve the same Lord Jesus Christ.”

Brother Novotny passed on to me a most

Peasants and Prophets

interesting letter from a soldier at present serving in the Tyrol:

“Many thanks for the Bibles and copies of the ‘Messenger of Peace.’ I have distributed them amongst my comrades, and they are waiting for more. . . . Every Thursday and Sunday we meet on the side of a hill, and I tell my comrades that you meet in Prague at the same time. . . . Our ‘boys’ in the regiment are happy that I am amongst them, for I tell them as much as I can remember of what you told us about Jesus in the hall. . . . When I started there was only one with me, but I remembered what you said, that where two or three were gathered together Jesus was in the midst; and now we are many. My comrades want to be Baptists, and they wish to know how much it costs in money to be a Baptist, and what are the conditions of acceptance. We will impatiently wait for an answer to this question. The names of the soldiers who want to be Baptists are:

The Land of John Hus

[here follows a list of eleven non-commissioned officers and men]. Please send the information as soon as possible, and I shall tell them the conditions at the next meeting. Please, once more, do not let us wait too long.

“Your friend,

“_____”

Henry Novotny died during this present year (January, 1912), after a long and painful illness. His last days were full of peace, and he confidently looked forward to the time when his own land would be free from the yoke of Rome.

Joseph Novotny is the youngest child of Henry Novotny, and was baptised by his father in 1897, when only eleven years of age. At eighteen years he went to the German Baptist College at Hamburg, and spent two years there preparing for the ministry of the Word. After Hamburg, our young friend went to the Midland College at Nottingham, and since his return home

Peasants and Prophets

has taken classes in Philosophy and Theology in the Universities of Vienna, Prague, and Geneva. At present he is the leader of the work in Bohemia, visiting the country stations, confirming the believers, and doing the work of an evangelist in many scattered towns. Last summer (1911) he went for an extended preaching tour through the Carpathians, and was greatly used among the Slavs dwelling on the eastern side of Hungary. Gradually the truth is winning its way in the ancient land; the old Husite spirit is not dead. In one village some of the friends began to read the Bible and to pray; they gathered themselves together every Sabbath; at last they were brought before the civil authorities. The justice asked them: "What do you want? Are you dissatisfied with your Church? Are you not satisfied with the priest? What is the matter?"

The answer came all unexpectedly to the magistrate: "We are dissatisfied with our-



JOSEPH NOVOTNY.

To face p. 24.]



HENRY NOVOTNY.

The Land of John Hus

selves. Here in this book is our only guide and our only hope for satisfaction."

Mr. Novotny and his family have done excellent work for the Baptists in Bohemia; through good report and ill they have kept on their way. Occasionally help has come to them from English friends; the Bohemian Mission in connection with the Scottish Baptists are nobly helping the work; but if Bohemia is to be won for Christ their hands must be upheld and their work established by British and American Baptists.

Moravia

THE Baptist work in Moravia is led by a man who is, in the truest sense of the word, a whole-hearted patriot, ardently longing for the political freedom of his country, but at the same time burning with an unquenchable zeal and passion for the salvation of his fellow-citizens. Norbert Fabian Čápek is in the very prime of life. He was born in the memorable year 1870, at Radomyšl, in Bohemia. In his veins flows the blood of the martyrs, for his forbears were adherents of John Hus, and were called upon to seal their testimony to Christ by imprisonment and finally martyrdom. Under the long-continued persecutions, and the tremendous pressure of the Papacy, the family became Roman Catholic, but the tradition of a better and purer faith still

Moravia

lived on, and through the years of darkness there was a love and longing for the Word of God.

As a lad, he was of a deeply religious temperament, and at eleven years of age he became an acolyte in one of the churches in his native town. As he helped the priests to serve at the altar he formed a desire to become one of the ministrants of the Most High, and thought that in such labours he could best serve his Lord. Gradually he discovered that many of the priests were leading lives unworthy of the followers of Jesus Christ, and his soul began to revolt against their unclean practices, but he continued his studies with a view to becoming a servant of the Roman Catholic Church.

At sixteen years of age Čápek revolted against the many evils incidental to the Romanist system, and he definitely severed his connection with the Church. He was not aware of any other churches when he set out in quest of Truth. At last

Peasants and Prophets

he found himself in Vienna, a friendless youth, not knowing where to turn for help or guidance. Morning after morning he tramped the streets in search of work, but the quest was fruitless, and one afternoon, utterly cast down, weary and dispirited, he was sitting upon a bench in a public park, when Johann Rottmayer invited him to a prayer-meeting in the hall of the Baptists.

The strange name, "Baptist," was at first a hindrance to him, but on learning that the Baptists were nearly akin in their principles and practices to the old "Bohemian brethren," and that they based their doctrines upon the Word of God, he ventured to the meeting. His heart was touched by that which he heard and experienced there, and the result was a surrender of life to Jesus Christ and the acceptance of the Holy Spirit as his guide. The struggle was a severe one, but at last grace triumphed, and on March 3, 1888, he was baptised in Vienna upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and was



NORBERT FABIAN CAPEK.

To face p. 28.]

Moravia

immediately admitted to the church fellowship. Later in the year he went to Pozsony, a frontier town in Hungary, and commenced to preach the Gospel to the Slovacs, with the result that in less than three years he had baptised more than seventy believers. During these three years he started a mission station in Chojnice. The work was blessed, a church was formed, and a building erected in which the congregation met for worship. These days were trying ones to the young man's faith. Oftentimes he was in dire straits, and on more than one occasion had not even a kreutzer (one-fifth of a penny) with which to purchase a glass of water by the wayside.

The year 1891 saw his entrance into the Baptist College in Hamburg, and during the succeeding four years he was preparing himself for what is undoubtedly his life's work. Finishing his course, he accepted the pastorate of the largest Baptist Church in Saxony, in the town of Planitz. Again

Peasants and Prophets

and again the great need of his own land was impressed upon him. He could not quietly minister to an alien people whilst his fellow-countrymen had not the light of the glorious Gospel, and in the year 1898 the great resolve was taken to go to his own people. Moravia at that time, as now, was predominantly Roman Catholic, with several Lutheran churches for German-speaking settlers, but Cäpek bravely entered into the capital (Brünn), and commenced to preach the Gospel. The early days were exceedingly difficult; priests and police harassed him, all manner of obstacles were placed in his way, but he believed that he was led by the Spirit of God to labour there, and continued the struggle. During the first three months he only managed to make one friend. After the first year's work the tide turned, and many began to attend the services, with the result that during his ten years' ministry in Moravia he has baptised

Moravia

more than 500 believers, has established five churches, and has a number of stations in many of the chief cities of the kingdom. Mission stations have also been established amongst the Czechs, in Poland, Russia, and the Carpathian mountains in Hungary. At present he is in charge of all this work, and, in addition to his pastoral labours, he is editor of the largest weekly paper, *Pravda*, published in Moravia, and of two very popular religious magazines.

He has the pen of a ready writer, and has flooded the country with small and large pamphlets setting forth the Baptist position, faith, and principles.

His hymns are in use to-day in all the Bohemian Baptist Churches, and are being sung in Hungary, Russia, and far-off America. By his editorial work, public meetings, and preaching services, he has done more than any living man to prepare Moravia to receive the Baptist faith. His work has influenced the secular press, and

Peasants and Prophets

frequently articles appear in the daily newspapers advocating the separation of Church and State, exposing the sacerdotal spirit of the Roman Catholic Church, declaiming against the baptism of unconscious infants, advocating the freedom of the individual to worship God without the intervention of priest or prelate. Recently an article appeared in a leading paper arguing that the time was more than ripe for a new Reformation in Moravia, as the Roman Catholic Church was not fitted to meet the spiritual needs of the great Slav population.

Moravia can be won for evangelical religion, and be won by Baptists if the Baptists wish!

Baptists in the Balkans

TO mention the Balkans to the average man is to be immediately plied with questions concerning fierce brigands, hardy mountaineers, wily diplomats, and the struggles of a people for political freedom from the yoke of the "unspeakable Turk"; but to Baptists Bulgaria should be a land of intense and increasing interest. The story of Baptist beginnings in that land is a fascinating one; it can be summed up in a sentence: "*And they which were scattered abroad under the persecutions which arose under the Tsar Alexander the Third, went as far as Bulgaria, preaching the Word, and many gave themselves unto the Lord and were added unto the church.*" It is not my purpose in this sketch to tell the story of the Churches at Rustchuk and

Peasants and Prophets

Lompalonka, both founded by Russian exiles, or of Kazanlik, where the friends advertised for someone to come and baptise them, or of the many interesting communities in that great land, but to introduce one of the Bulgarian pioneers of Baptist principles and practices in South-Eastern Europe.

Peter Doycheff, of Tchirpan, is a giant in stature, gentle and winning in manner, well beloved by the friends who have been led to Jesus Christ under his teaching, a university graduate living the life of the peasants around him, for the Gospel's sake.

Born at Panagurishte, a large town some sixty miles north-west of Philippopolis, in the year 1856, he early in life followed the trade and calling of our own Carey, and, whilst busy earning his daily bread at the making of shoes, he was brought to the Lord, at twenty years of age, under the ministry of the Rev. Dr. House, a missionary of the American Foreign Mission Board. Shortly

Baptists in the Balkans

after his conversion our brother entered the missionary school at Samakov, a few hours' journey from the capital, Sofia. Graduating from Samakov, Peter Doycheff crossed the Atlantic, and commenced to study in the Baptist College at Hightstown, N.J., where he specialised in the sciences. He remained here three years, and then entered the Princetown Theological Seminary, and passed from thence to the McCormick University of Chicago, where he took all the classes common to theological students, save that in Hebrew. Opportunities for service in the States were pressed upon him, but he heard the call of his own land, and returned to the Balkans to work amongst his own people. In 1901 he was convinced of the truth of believers' baptism, and was baptised by the Rev. R. E. Ferrier, of Poughkeepsie, New York. July, 1902, saw the commencement of his work as a pioneer Bulgarian Baptist to the Bulgarians. He chose Tchirpan, a central town, in which

Peasants and Prophets

to commence operations, and in this venture he had no missionary society behind him, no fixed salary, not even a congregation to stand by his side, but alone he launched out into the deep, in the sure faith that the Lord would provide for his needs. Even to-day he has no fixed stipend. Friends in America, who know him and value his work, and our own good friend, Mr. Wm. Oncken, Secretary of the German Baptist Mission, have been able to help occasionally, but oftentimes the bottom of the barrel has had to be scraped; yet through all our brother bears this testimony: "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me." During the nine years in which Peter Doycheff has been working in Tchirpan, he has baptised ninety-eight upon profession of faith, whilst others are awaiting baptism in the town. A chapel has been built, and mission stations have been established at Stara Zagora, Novo Zagora, Borisograd, Shipka, and other places.

Baptists in the Balkans

That there are manifold difficulties confronting the brethren in Bulgaria, the following letter from Peter Doycheff fully confirms:

“Recently the Devil waked up from his sleep and gave us a new persecution. The reason of it was because I have baptised lately eleven persons, and at the last baptism which took place were two young men well qualified for the preaching of the Word of God, one of them just graduated in the missionary school at Samakov, and the other is a student from the same school. They are very good consecrated Christians. After their baptism Brother Vedoloff was called by our Brother Vulkoff to go to Haskovo, to visit him for two weeks, and to do some Christian work. He came back very encouraged from Haskovo, where are ready several persons for baptism.

“After resting a few days in Tchirpan he went to Kazanlik, and from there will go to Rustchuk, Lom, and other places, to get

Peasants and Prophets

acquainted with our brethren, and to preach wherever he goes.

“Now let me tell you the most pathetic story of the other, Brother Christoff. I went with him to a village in the Tchirpan district and hired a large room where to live and preach the glad tidings of Christ. For a few days the work went well; the people were gathered to him as the bees to the hive. The priest of the village has seen that his sheep had gone after another shepherd. For a time he did not know what to do. He tried once or twice to defend his religion before our Brother Christoff, but all has been in vain, because the darkness cannot stand against the light, and he was compelled to retreat from the line. There is a saying in Bulgaria which is applied to the religious leaders of the Greek Church, and it is this: ‘When they cannot succeed with the cross, they take up the sword.’ So he did. He went to the mayor of the village, and commanded him to drive out our

Baptists in the Balkans

Brother Christoff. The mayor took up an ass, went to the room of our young preacher, put his luggage on the ass, and sent him to me with a policeman. When I saw him come, I said, 'The Lord says, "If we are driven from one place, go to another."' So we did. After a day or two we went to another village, where a man received us cordially, gave us a room for living and preaching the blessed Gospel of Christ. The man who gave us the room was what Americans call a 'saloon-keeper,' but the English, 'public-house keeper.' This man within a few days understood our teaching; the Holy Spirit enlightened his heart, and he decided to give up the saloon business, and said, 'I have a house which I need not; you can use it for the Lord.' Many others were glad to hear the message of Christ for the salvation of their precious souls.

"That was all very well, but when the Sunday came, then the decided battle had

Peasants and Prophets

to be fought. But, alas! at that Lord's Day, two priests and a layman from Tchirpan went to the village where the Master's servant was engaged in His blessed service; the priests gathered the people in the public school, called our worker also to go there, and began to tell the people that the Protestants are English agents, paid £25 monthly, trying, through the preaching of the Gospel, to make them Protestants, and then England will come to subdue our land. Many other such excited lies were told, and at the end our brother wanted to defend himself, but was prevented from doing so. Finally, the mob began to maltreat him and beat him very terribly. In this very time up jumps a strong young man in the crowd and cries out at the top of his voice: 'I am the Protestant; you can kill me if you can!' delivers our brother from the hands of the angry wolves, and tells him to run away for his life. He ran to his room, but before reaching it he was

Baptists in the Balkans

caught again by the furious mob, who began again to kick and beat him with sticks, reaping sickles, and fists. The other young man arrives once more on the scene, and at the risk of his life delivers him once more from being killed. After a few days' medical treatment, our Brother Christoff got well again, and was ready for the battle of Christ. It was of no use to go any more in that village. Instead of going there, he went to another village, called Kostenetz, far from here, where we had about twenty persons baptised and no one to preach to them. In Kostenetz the battle is won, the fort is taken, the persecution stayed, and the Lord glorified."

A recent visit to Sofia has resulted in great blessing to the friends there, in that a serious division has been healed, and unity of forces has been accomplished.

At the present time three young men who have been brought under his influence are being trained for the ministry of the Word

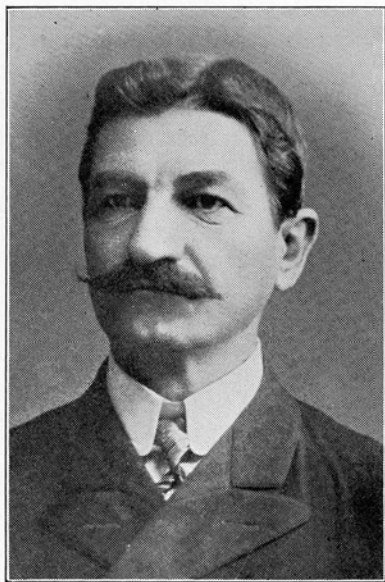
Peasants and Prophets

in Bulgaria. His only son, Jupiter, is a brilliant scholar, the first student of his year in Samakov College, and both father and son are looking forward to the time when the proposed Baptist World Alliance Theological Seminary shall become an established fact, and Jupiter a student therein.

Doycheff frequently undertakes long journeys to distant towns to preach the Gospel, and it is nothing unusual for him to suffer persecution, bitter and violent opposition upon the part of the priests and police, and even to learn to take the despoiling of his goods cheerfully. Despite this attempt of the enemy to deter him, he has kept steadily on his way, cheered in heart by many conversions, by the steady growth of the work under his wise leadership, and confident in the assurance that ultimately Bulgaria will be led to the feet of Jesus Christ.



BERG SCHLIFF.



PETER DOYCHEFF.

[To face p. 43.]

The Ancient Capital of Bulgaria : Tirnovó

THE road from Kazanlik to Rustchuk is over the Shipka Pass, through Gabrovo ("the Manchester of Bulgaria," as a Kazanlik merchant described it to me), past the great and gorgeous Russian church and monastery at Shipka, and by the snow-clad Balkans. As we approached Tirnovó, the city appeared to be framed in limestone cliffs, looming high above us. The road winds its way through a gorge, and as we rode along we had continually changing glimpses of the "city set upon a hill." Hills surrounded us on every side, covered almost to their summits with streets of houses, gaudily coloured; whilst domes of churches, minarets of mosques, memorial towers, large buildings,

Peasants and Prophets

ruined palaces, and trees and shrubs lent variety and charm to the scene.

Like many Oriental cities which it has been my privilege to visit, "distance lends enchantment to the view"; a closer acquaintance revealed the mean houses and wretchedly paved streets, and one's nostrils were assailed by a variety of odours, not always of the most pleasant and fragrant kind. The hotel was of a most primitive character, and the visitor had to find his way through stables and outhouses to the bedroom—a bedroom almost bare of furniture, provision for the morning tub being found in the corridor, a trough for the use of all the guests.

It is exceedingly difficult to give a correct idea of the plan of the city; apparently it was not built to a plan, but, like Topsy, "it just growed up." The streets run up the slopes of the hills, and oftentimes the houses seemed to be perched, like eagle's nests, upon overhanging crags. Tirnovo

The Ancient Capital of Bulgaria

has had a varied and chequered history; it has been through the centuries the "cock-pit" of the Balkans. We noticed the strong fortifications hewn out of the solid limestone rocks, and just beyond the city, like deep scars upon the surface of the ground, are the shallow trenches in which besiegers and defenders found their temporary place of advantage.

Here is "Baldwin's" ruined castle, where Kalojan held the Frank Emperor of Constantinople a close prisoner, whilst in every direction are evidences of the early struggles between Christian and Moslem, a struggle only ended by the Treaty of the early seventies. On the Church of the Forty Martyrs is the following inscription:

"Built in the name of the Forty Martyrs, by the Bulgarian King, John Asen II., to commemorate his victory over the Greeks. Converted into a Turkish mosque during the *régime* of the Sultans, and re-transformed into a Christian church in 1877."

Peasants and Prophets

The whole church is of great interest to the antiquary and the architect. The pillars are of polished marble, set upon square pedestals, the dados of which are ornamented with bulls' heads and wreaths, supposed to have been brought from the old Roman colony of Nicopolis. They speak of the time when the mighty Roman legions were masters of the countries by the banks of the Danube. The pillars and walls of the church, like the great mosque of Sophia in Constantinople, bear evidence of the fanaticism and malice of the Turkish conquerors, for gashes and punctures, made by scimitar and spear, are everywhere to be noticed.

The town is full of mosques and churches, and they certainly lend variety to the scene. The shops are of interest to the wayfarer, for they are quite open to the street, and encroach not a little upon the causeway. The din of the tinsmith, the cry of the fruit hawker, the call of the bullock-driver as he

The Ancient Capital of Bulgaria

leads his patient yoke of oxen through the streets, help to make a veritable Babel of sounds. Many of the women are busy spinning the wool as they sit upon the threshold of their houses, or move to and fro in the throng, whilst now and again we can see through the open doors the worker at the hand-loom, preparing the coarse cloth in which many of the people are clad. A Turkish woman glides by, closely veiled, but one *feels* that her eyes are taking in every detail concerning the stranger who passes so closely to her. The Turks, wearing the red "fezes," are easily distinguishable from the Bulgarians, whose heads are covered by the national head-dress, the "kalpak," whilst the Christian women certainly lend "colour" to the ever-changing scene by their embroidered garments.

Here and there the roadway is almost blocked with the huge troughs, in which men with bare feet are "treading" the grapes, whilst near by, the oxen, who have

Peasants and Prophets

drawn the load from the vineyards, are lying upon the ground chewing the cud, and the women are busy carrying the juice from the trough to the wine-vats, standing in rows upon the pavement.

The old palace of the "Czars of the Bulgarians" could tell stories of intrigue and massacre if its stones could speak, whilst the public buildings have owned many masters, of many nationalities. Gradually "the old order changeth, giving place to the new," and schools, gymnasia, banks, and other public buildings are being erected in the town.

Jacob Klundt, Exile and Prisoner

SHORTLY after five o'clock one morning the steward of the ss. *Ference Josef* came to my berth with the welcome news that in half an hour we should be alongside the pier at Lompalanka, Bulgaria, where I was to leave the vessel and pay a visit to the little Baptist community worshipping in the town. Just beyond the Customs barrier was a group of tall, swarthy men, evidently waiting for the landing of a passenger. Passport and baggage formalities over, a short, blue-eyed, well-bearded man stepped forward from the midst of the waiting group, and in German introduced himself as Jacob Klundt, preacher in Lompalanka. I was speedily introduced to the other members of the company (elders of the church), and we were

Peasants and Prophets

soon making haste to Brother Klundt's home and breakfast. The walk from the pier, through the town, revealed that a goodly proportion of the inhabitants were still Turks, for the closely-veiled figures of the women at the well, the baggy breeches of the men, the many mosques, and, not least of all, the Turkish school, all reminded one that in the days not long ago Bulgaria was subject to the powers that be at Constantinople.

Arriving at the house, we were soon made welcome by the family of the preacher, both children and grandchildren greeting us with Biblical salutations. During the morning we were introduced to the story of one of the "men who are making history" in that out-of-the-way corner of Europe. Quiet, unostentatious, and persistent have been the labours of the subject of our sketch, but nevertheless his influence is being felt to-day in the mines round Pittsburg, U.S.A., on the great ranches of the

Jacob Klundt, Exile and Prisoner

Middle West, and in the Bulgarian homesteads in the Great North-West of Canada. In one year alone, no less than eighteen fine young men, with the spirit of travel, adventure, and ambition strong within them, left the homeland and the little Baptist Church to seek a larger and freer life in the "El Dorado" of the West.

Jacob Klundt is of German extraction, his forbears being amongst the German immigrants to Russia in the early years of the eighteenth century. He was born in Rohrbach, South Russia, on February 5th, 1839, and at the age of three years removed with his parents to Neu-Dantzic, and later to the province of Kherson, where he lived until his exile from Russia was decreed.

When Klundt was nineteen years of age a great revival of religion broke out amongst the German settlers in the Kherson government; in his village alone no less than 150 persons were converted, and subsequently baptised. Klundt was powerfully affected by

Peasants and Prophets

the new movement, and was amongst the first to be immersed, and from the time of his baptism he was an ardent and vigorous preacher of the Gospel. His activities naturally attracted to him the attention of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, with the usual result that on many occasions he was taken off to prison. When questioned upon this period of his life, our brother shrugged his great square shoulders, and with a hearty laugh said that he had not kept an account of the number of times he had been imprisoned, or even of the number of prisons in which he had been incarcerated: every imprisonment to him was an added opportunity to preach the Gospel to his fellow-prisoners—to men who were in prison for crimes against property or person. In 1865, Jacob Klundt, with three others, was exiled from Russia, and went to Tulcea, Katalui, and Bucarest, in Roumania, whilst eighteen families from the village were sent to Siberia. Five years later our brother

Jacob Klundt, Exile and Prisoner

was brought into touch with Dr. Alexander Thomson, of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and commenced to work for him as a colporteur, with the result that in two years the exile was travelling through the Balkan States, traversing the great mountain ranges of Bulgaria and Macedonia, selling the Word of God to the hardy mountaineers, and preaching the Gospel in many wayside places.

Ofttimes was he brought into conflict with the authorities, and in many places he suffered imprisonment, whilst he was turned out of Salonica, Uskub, and many other Turkish towns. Notwithstanding manifold hardships, Klundt sold his wares, and gained friends and converts in and amongst Serbs, Bulgars, Macedonians, and Albanians.

In 1880 he visited Lompalanka, and as a result of his sales and talks, a Bulgarian teacher and his wife were converted, and subsequently baptised. From these small

Peasants and Prophets

beginnings the church began, and in 1894 a brother was sent from the Missions Committee in Hamburg to be pastor. Outstations were opened in the villages reached by Klundt on his rounds, and thus a strong and growing community has been gathered together. The little church in Lompalanka is a neat, compact building, in a good situation, and seats about 180 persons.

He is seventy-two years of age, has been in prisons in many lands for the Gospel's sake, even now enters upon long and perilous journeys in bitterly cold weather, that Christ may be preached, that the saving health of the Gospel may be known throughout those lands included in the "Macedonian cry." Nothing seems to daunt him; he has but one aim in life, one thing after which he strives, one goal towards which he is ever moving—that Christ may reign in the Balkan States, that His Name may be over all the tribes.



VILLAGE OF VERDI SCAVO

To face p. 55.]

South of the Carpathians

ROUMANIA is usually associated in the minds of the British people with that fascinating personality and gracious writer, the Queen of Roumania, better known by her pen name, "Carmen Sylva." To Baptists, Roumania has long been known as the land where our exiled brethren from Russia have for many years found a home and a refuge from the tyranny of Russian officialdom.

For nearly thirty years there has been a German Baptist Church in Bucarest, which, from the earliest days until nearly two years ago, had for its pastor Brother S. Hamerschmidt. Since then a young man has been called to the ministry of the church, and owing to the success of the work, long-

Peasants and Prophets

dormant hostility has been aroused against the Baptist people.

The Rev. Berg Schlipf is a native of Newark, New Jersey, thirty-seven years of age, and was baptised by his father sixteen years ago, at Killalee, Renfrew County, Ontario, Canada.

He was educated for the ministry at Peddie Institute, Hightstown, New Jersey, and is also a graduate of the Rochester Theological Seminary. His early years were spent in pioneer work in the Great North-West of Canada, and for four and a-half years Mr. Schlipf was the minister of the Church at Rosenfeld, North Dakota. During his ministry there he baptised 118 upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ, many of whom were immigrants from Roumania. These converts were anxious that the friends in the homeland should receive the Gospel, and in 1909 they requested their pastor to go to Roumania, visit their friends, and preach the Gospel. During

South of the Carpathians

his preaching tour through Roumania, Mr. Schlipf became acquainted with the friends in Bucarest, and in June, 1910, he settled as pastor of the church. Since that time twenty-seven have been baptised; others are awaiting baptism; the church has been enlarged and practically rebuilt, and mission stations have been established.

The forward movement has brought in its train an attempt to expel Schlipf from the country. In November, 1910, the Director of the Secret Police commanded our brother to appear before him, and the following conversation ensued:

“I have called you to my office to tell you that in our opinion it is advisable for you to leave the country immediately. I am approaching you privately, as I am not anxious to have your expulsion ordered by the Council of the State.”

“Why am I to be deported from the country? I have not at any time spoken against the Government.”

Peasants and Prophets

“No one says that you have.”

“I have not made any attacks upon the State religion.”

“No one says that you have.”

“Why do you wish me to leave the country when I have done no wrong to individuals or to the Government?”

“You are a minister; you preach for a salary; all sorts of people, such as Hungarians, Roumanians, Bulgarians, and Germans, visit your chapel, and we do not wish you and people of your faith to carry on propaganda work in Roumania; such work as you are doing lessens the power and the glory of the State Church.”

“At present I only preach in the German tongue; in the whole country there are only 200 Roumanian Baptists——”

The Director interrupted with: “Yes; but if you are not stopped there will be 2,000 before another year has passed.”

“It is unjust for you to expel me on the ground that I receive a salary for preach-

South of the Carpathians

ing, when all the ministers of the State Church are paid for their services.”

“Stay in Roumania if you wish, but we will not allow you to preach.”

Mr. Schlipf then went to the American Legation, being an American citizen, and saw the Consul-General, who is of Baptist stock, and through him the whole case was laid before M. Bratianu, the Prime Minister of Roumania. Mr. Harvey, the Consul-General, was able to assure the Prime Minister that the Baptists were not anarchists, but orderly, law-abiding citizens in every land and country of Europe and America.

A few days after the case being placed in the hands of the Consul-General, the Director of the Secret Police called upon Mr. Schlipf and informed him that by the orders of the Prime Minister he was to be allowed to remain in Roumania, and to carry on his work in quietness and peace.

The Romance of Baptist Work in Roumania

BAPTIST work in Roumania can be traced back to two main and distinct sources: (*a*) that which is solely confined to the German-speaking colonists (of whom there are many thousands in the land), started by disciples of J. G. Oncken, of Hamburg; and (*b*) the small churches in the Dobrogea, or provinces bordering upon the Black Sea, initiated by brave men, exiled for their faith from the neighbouring kingdom of Russia.

The German work has its headquarters in Bucarest, the capital city, and was founded in the year 1862 by brethren who had been in close touch with J. G. Oncken, G. W. Lehmann, and J. Köbner, the German Baptist pioneers. Although a

Baptist Work in Roumania

strenuous and conscientious work has been carried on for nearly half-a-century, the membership of the church only stands at eighty-seven to-day, in a population of more than 40,000 German-speaking residents. For twenty-five years the work was under the direction of the Rev. J. Hammerschmidt, who is now living in retirement in North Germany. Since his resignation the pastorate has been accepted by a young German-American, the Rev. Berg Schlipf, and he has also undertaken the oversight of the Baptist work amongst the German populations scattered throughout Roumania. Under his supervision the work is growing satisfactorily, the chapel in Bucarest being too small for the regular congregations, and there is a scheme afoot for its enlargement; conversions are taking place with heartening frequency, and several baptisms have recently been reported. The friends at Bucarest are considerably handicapped in undertaking any forward movement by

Peasants and Prophets

reason of the huge debt upon their premises ; they have to find the interest upon 17,000 francs mortgage.

Since the advent of Mr. Schlipf he has undertaken many journeys, visiting the scattered churches and stations, and prospecting in such towns as Ploesti, Galatz, Braila, and Craiova, with a view to the opening of mission stations. In his church he has two colporteurs, who are able to distribute and sell about 6,000 copies of the Bible and New Testament each year, and they are continually reporting to their pastor likely fields for fresh aggressive mission work. The forward movement cannot be carried on without outside help ; the members of the church are mostly very poor, and if it had not been for the liberality of one brother, a member of the church from the beginning, the community would long ago have come to financial grief.

In the Black Sea provinces there are three churches—Katalui, with three stations

Baptist Work in Roumania

and a membership of sixty-nine, to whom the Rev. Martin Issler ministers; Cogea-lac, with three stations and a membership of fifty-two (the friends here are at present without a pastor); and at Mangalia, with six stations and forty members, with the Rev. A. Lück as pastor.

In addition to the above there is a Church of Roumanians at Cerna Verda, and another of Russians at Tulcea, the latter having a Russian exile, Borisimenkoff, as their leader. In the year 1886 Brother Wiehler, then President of the Russian Baptist Union, had to flee from Russia owing to the bitter persecutions of that time, and, after many wanderings, made his way to Tulcea, in Roumania, where he built a chapel, a lasting memorial to his faith and fidelity. He did not, however, live to see much fruit from his labours, for in the following year he was gathered home in what should have been the prime of his life, his death being—humanly speaking—

Peasants and Prophets

the result of all that he had been called upon to suffer for the Word of God and his testimony to redeeming grace.

Under existing Roumanian law the Government will not tolerate any Protestant or Baptist work amongst Roumanians, save by those who are Roumanian subjects. Here and there in the land little communities of Baptists have been gathered together as the result of the reading of the Word of God, and in Wallachia, at the present time, there is an "Anti-Baby Baptising Society," formed by the villagers as a protest against the baptism of any save believers—a position come to without any external aid or teaching whatsoever. The villagers have successfully resisted all attempts to break down their opposition to the Greek Orthodox Church, and are taking a firm stand upon the plain teaching of the New Testament concerning the doctrine of baptism. The spirit of inquiry is spreading, and many doors are being opened. One

Baptist Work in Roumania

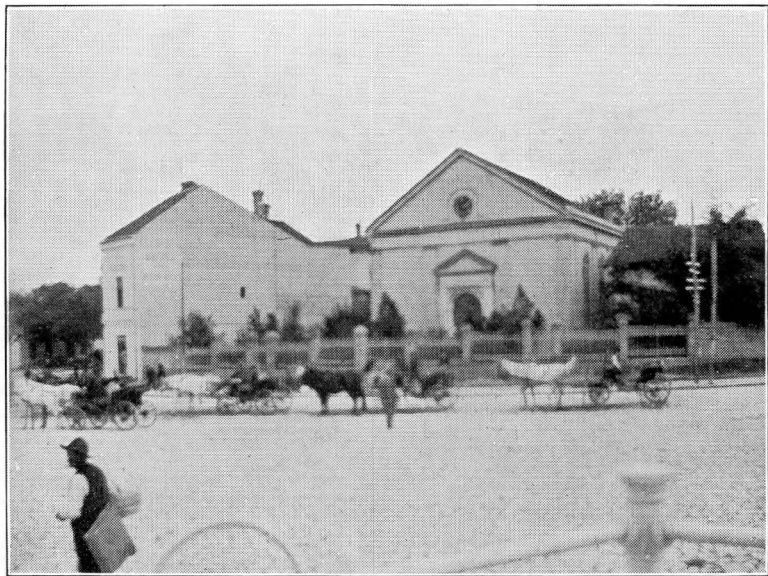
of the members of the church at Bucarest, a young Roumanian, is at present at Hamburg Baptist Seminary, studying, with a view to returning to his own land to preach the Gospel, and it is hoped that sufficient funds will be forthcoming to enable him to become the pastor of the Church at Cerna Verda. That the Roumanians can be reached is proved by the remarkable success attending the work of the Hungarian brethren labouring amongst the Roumanians in Hungary.

The immediate needs for Roumania and the Baptist work there are: (1) Help for the Church in Bucarest, that they may be freed from the debt upon their buildings and thus be able to undertake extension work amongst the large German-speaking populations in the great commercial centres; (2) a pastor to be appointed to the Church at Cogealac, and means for his support for a year or so; and (3) opportunities should be given whereby many

Peasants and Prophets

likely young men, already in the churches, may be trained in a Bible-school, that in process of time they may go forth as evangelists to their own people.

The foundations for a great and lasting work have been patiently and truly laid; the time is ripe for the erection of the superstructure to the glory of God and the welfare of the Roumanian nation. The brethren in Roumania are looking to the Baptist World Alliance to help them.



CONFISCATED CHAPEL IN BELGRADE.

To face p. 67.]

Baptist Struggles in Servia

SERVIA is one of the most picturesque and fertile of the Balkan States, and a journey through the land is a continual feast of colour, majestic snow-crowned peaks, rushing torrents, broad pasture-lands; and everywhere the peasants in their sheep-skins, and the women in their embroidered skirts and quaint head-dresses. Belgrade, the capital, is built upon a lofty promontory, formed by the junction of the rivers Danube and Save. Through the centre of the city is the famous boulevard, Teratsia, more than a mile in length, where are to be found the chief shops, banks, business houses, hotels, and in the midst of all, the golden domes of the Royal palace, or Konak.

Here, in 1903, King Alexander and

Peasants and Prophets

Queen Draga were brutally done to death by the regicide officers of the Servian Army, a crime which will for ever stain the annals of the country.

The window from which the bodies of the late King and Queen were thrown is the fourth from the left in the right-hand building, the left-hand one being the new palace.

Away from the modern boulevard one comes across little old-fashioned houses and quiet squares, reminiscent of the Turkish occupation; whilst in the public gardens at the eastern end of Teratsia (from whence one has a magnificent view of the Danube and the Save) there are many statues and monuments, erected by a grateful people to the warriors, patriots, and leaders who freed Servia from the galling yoke of the Turk.

Two miles away, by electric car, is the famous Topchider Park, where the residence of Milosh, the founder of the Obrenovitch dynasty, still stands amongst



THE KONAK (ROYAL PALACE), BELGRADE.

To face p. 69.]

Baptist Struggles in Servia

beautiful grounds, many miles in extent. In the park I was greatly interested in the gangs of convicts, six in a gang, with an armed warder on guard, weeding, hoeing, and digging, and, in a few instances, road making. From inquiries put to my guide, the leader of our little Baptist Church in Belgrade, I found that the majority of the convicts thus working in the open were political prisoners, men who, for good or ill, were supposed to be against the Government. At evening, whilst standing near to the market-place, I saw some of the gangs being marched back to prison, the people in the streets seeming to be utterly indifferent to the procession passing through their midst.

At the western end of the Teratsia, near to the Market Hall, standing prominently upon a great square formed by the junction of four main roads, is a building of interest to all Evangelical Christians. For some years a wealthy Scotch merchant, Mr. Mackenzie, residing in Belgrade, whose

Peasants and Prophets

business was in Servia, devoted much of his leisure time to helping forward the work of Bible colporteurs and preachers in Servia, more especially in Belgrade. So successful were his labours that ultimately a goodly number of Servians were converted, baptised, and formed into a church. Permission was sought from the Government for a chapel to be built, where the friends could meet and carry on their work in greater comfort than in a hired hall. The necessary permission was given, building operations were commenced, and at last, amidst much rejoicing, the chapel was opened free of debt, to the glory of God, for the proclamation of the Eternal Gospel. For a few weeks the building was crowded with an eager and attentive audience, the work continued to grow, until the priests of the Orthodox Church, jealous of the new movement, moved the civil authorities to seize the building, and to imprison some of the leaders upon the charge of

Baptist Struggles in Servia

illegal assembly. Many attempts have been made to obtain permission to re-open the building, but all have failed. Two years ago I saw the ground between the railings and the main door of the building covered with rails and gear for the electric tramway; and a few weeks ago (1911) the gates were all padlocked, and the premises still standing a silent witness to the bigotry and intolerance, not only of the priests, but also of the Government officials.

Despite the restrictive measures of the Servian Government, the Baptist witness is not quite dead in the land. Servia does not figure in any Baptist Handbook, but in Belgrade, and in many country places, are those whose hearts the Lord has touched, who meet periodically for worship, even although to meet is to be in danger of the inner prison and the convict gang. Our brother, Julius Peter, travelling bishop to the scattered Baptists of Servia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina, a devout minister

Peasants and Prophets

of the Gospel, visits these friends, brings to them greetings from their fellow-believers in other parts of the vineyard, and helps them to keep in touch with the Baptists in other lands. One of the most precious memories in all my varied experience of Baptist work clusters round visits paid in the company of Brother Peter to "the scattered ones." The reading of the Word, the quiet moments spent in prayer, the Communion service, with black bread and native wine, served in a china plate and cup, were to me a real "fellowship of saints," a foretaste of joys above. These people of simple faith, longsuffering in manifold persecutions, are surely amongst the great ones in the Kingdom of Heaven. "These are they who through much tribulation are finding an entrance to the Kingdom of God."



ANNUAL CONGRESS (1911) EVANGELICAL BAPTISTS, ST. PETERSBURG.

[To face p. 73.

The Baptist Hosts in Russia

THE Baptist movement in Russia, now rapidly spreading from the River Vistula in the West to the Urals and beyond in the East, from the Baltic in the North to the Caspian in the South, can be traced back to four distinct sources. First, and chiefest of all, the great awakening in South Russia and the Caucasus, due primarily to the men who, having been in touch with, and influenced by, the three German Baptist pioneers, Oncken, Köbner, and Lehmann, visited the German settlements in the South of the Empire, and preached the Gospel to their fellow-countrymen with marked success. Many of these German settlers had Russian serfs working for them, and by their consistent life and character, they gradually influenced the men in their employ.

Peasants and Prophets

The first peasant converts from Orthodoxy were Ratushny, Lassotsky, and Rjaboschapka, the two former being ordinary farm workers and the latter a blacksmith, serf to the great landed proprietor, Schibeko, of the village of Lubomika. Rjaboschapka was hired by a German, by name Martin Hübeer, a godly Christian man, and between master and man there were frequent discussions as to the truth of the Baptist interpretations of the New Testament. At last the Orthodox Russian was convinced of the need of the new birth and of baptism upon profession of faith. He was eager to follow his Lord's command, but the German friends hesitated to baptise him owing to the bitter persecution meted out to any who assisted in winning Orthodox Russians from the Græco-Russian Church, but ultimately our friend had his desire fulfilled. In the German colony of Alt-Danzig, on June 23, 1869, thirty German residents were baptised by

The Baptist Hosts in Russia

Abraham Unger, a man who had been greatly blessed in his spiritual life by contact with Oncken. A Russian peasant from Karlovka, Jefin Zimbal, contrived to receive baptism with the rest of the candidates, and afterwards baptised Rjaboschapka, who, in his turn, baptised Michael Ratushny, and thus was commenced the work amongst the Russian peasantry in the South of the Empire.

Persecution, bitter and severe, broke out against these early converts, and the three brethren were brought before a Russian tribunal, and were cast into prison. In that they would not give a pledge to desist from preaching the new doctrines, they were sentenced to exile—Lassotsky to Transcaucasia, where he spent eleven years, and now lives in old age and extreme poverty at Rostov, on the Don; Rjaboschapka was sent to Erivan, near to Mount Ararat, and after five years there he was allowed to proceed to Bulgaria, on condition that he did

Peasants and Prophets

not return to Russia. For a short while he enjoyed fellowship with the brethren in "the Garden of the Balkans," but his sufferings were speedily ended; he died at Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, within twelve months of his release, on February 18, 1900.

Simultaneously with the commencement of the work in the province of Kherson, the seeds of the Baptist doctrine were being sown in the Caucasus by a German artisan, by name Martin Kalweit, who, with his family, had settled in Tiflis in the year 1862.

Kalweit was brought into touch with a Tiflis Russian merchant. Voronia, a member of the sect of the Molokani, who, after many inquiries, asked for baptism, and was thus the first Russian in the Caucasus baptised, Kalweit being the ministrant. Voronia then baptised a young convert, sixteen years of age, known to many as V. Pavloff, one of God's best and choicest gifts to Russia. Pavloff was baptised in 1871, and was one of a church of ten members.

The Baptist Hosts in Russia

Voronia, Pavloff, and Ivanoff began to preach amongst the Molokani, and in scores of villages churches were established. In 1875, Pavloff entered as a student at the Hamburg Baptist Seminary, and later was ordained to the Baptist ministry by J. G. Oncken.

During these years the workers in Kher-son and the Caucasus were ignorant of each other's existence, but through some newspaper reports Pavloff heard of the work in the Kherson government, and on his return journey from Hamburg to Tiflis, he made for the village of Oseovo, and there met the brethren Ratushny, Lassotsky, and Rjaboschapka. During Pavloff's stay in Hamburg, his church in Tiflis was increased to forty members, and upon his return he undertook a long evangelistic journey, in company with Radionoff, through Transcaucasia to Mount Ararat and the shores of the Caspian Sea. In every place the truth was received with gladness,

Peasants and Prophets

many were baptised, and churches were established.

Ten years later persecution broke over the whole Caucasian territory. Voronia, Pavloff, and others were exiled to Orenburg, in Siberia, whilst Kalweit, Mazaieff, and others were exiled for eight years.

Despite the exile of pastor and prominent members, the church did not waver; services continued to be held, converts were baptised, and the work of the Lord was established. The remote corners of the Empire, Siberia and Transcaucasia, were filled with the banished Baptists, who, even in exile, preached the Lord Jesus, and had the joy of seeing the dwellers in strange lands being brought to the feet of the Christ.

The second source of the movement was again owing to German influence, and was largely confined to the Baltic provinces and Poland. On November 28, 1859, the first baptisms took place of Russian believers, as

The Baptist Hosts in Russia

a result of the apostolic labours of two brethren from Germany, Gottfried Alf and A. Aschendorf. These early pioneers suffered for their faith; beatings, scourgings, and imprisonments were their common experience. Oftentimes long and arduous journeys had to be taken in the depth of winter; meetings were held in the villages, where at any moment the dreaded police might enter, and hale all taking part in them off to prison; baptisms took place at dead of night in lonely and secluded spots—but the work grew and flourished.

Gottfried Alf died as he had lived, a quiet and faithful preacher of the Gospel, on December 18, 1898, at the age of sixty-seven years. Brother Aschendorf, his companion in many trials, tribulations, and perilous journeys, is still a Baptist preacher in Poland, ministering to a church of nearly three hundred members.

The third source of evangelistic revival in Russia was occasioned by the conversion of

Peasants and Prophets

a young British soldier in the Crimean War of 1856. For many years he prayed that the Gospel might find a way into Russia; after many years he became acquainted with two Russian princesses, who cordially invited him to St. Petersburg. He came once and again, and held meetings in drawing-rooms and palaces, and, through the blessing of God, many of the wealthy and noble class were led to Jesus Christ. Lord Radstock's name will ever be associated in the minds of many in Russia with the coming of a virile and strong faith in the Gospel. Among those converted under Lord Radstock's preaching were Colonel Paschkoff, Count Bobrinsky, Count Korff, and Colonel Tcherkoff. These friends threw open their great mansions to the preachers of the Gospel, and away on their estates in the country they held services for their serfs, and many were thus brought to Christ and to the Baptist faith.

The fourth source can be traced to the

The Baptist Hosts in Russia

activities of a Swedish Missionary Society, concerned for the welfare of Swedes living in the Baltic Provinces. Messrs. Thoren and Osterblom came as Lutheran pastors, were greatly used of God in winning many souls, and thus started a revival of religious life and fervour. They were finally deported from Russia by the authorities, but their work, like that of Lord Radstock, became Baptist in faith and practice.

Perils and Persecutions

LIBERTY for religious Dissenters was proclaimed in the Holy Russian Empire in 1905, but reactionaries were not removed from their posts of authority, with the natural result that in the far-flung corners of the Empire of the Tsar, many still suffer for their faith.

Last summer two young Baptists were desirous of entering into the state of matrimony. Having left the Orthodox Church they had forfeited civil rights, and marriage, according to the law, was impossible for them. What could they do? They were not prepared to enter into an illicit union. Through the medium of friends they approached the local Governor, pre-



STONE-LAYING CEREMONY "DOM EVANGELIA," ST. PETERSBURG. (1910.)

To face p. 82.]

Perils and Persecutions

sented their case to him, and after some hesitation they received permission to be married according to the custom of the Baptists. In harmony with the State decrees they notified the police of their intention, and advised them of the date and place of the ceremony. To their alarm the petty officials of the Police Department refused to sanction the ceremony. Three alternatives were before them: To renounce their Evangelical faith and return to the Orthodox Church; to enter into an illicit union; or proceed with the ceremony permitted by the Governor. The first was alien to their allegiance to Jesus Christ and the local Baptist Church; the second was unthinkable; the third alternative was the only possible. The day for the wedding arrived. Glad friends and joyous well-wishers forgathered to the church to see and take part in the marriage of two friends who had "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." The service proceeded, and all suddenly

Peasants and Prophets

the police entered the building and arrested everyone present.

Eighteen of the leaders of the church, including the pastor, elders, the bride and bridegroom, were beaten and scourged—weals and bruises showed only too plainly the effects of their rough usage; and the rest, more than sixty in number, were imprisoned for six weeks. The aged pastor, whose story was corroborated by two of his elders, told of how he was seized by his hair and literally dragged from the meeting-house through the streets, and flung into prison by these uniformed brutes, defying the law of the land. Were they punished for their transgression of the decrees of liberty? That is not the way of your bureaucrat. Their only punishment was promotion to higher posts, still further from the reach of the Central Government.

Again: Two members of the Church in S——, after serving their Lord and Master in quietness and comparative peace, heard

Perils and Persecutions

the welcome call to "higher service." They were aliens from the commonwealth owing to their severance from the Orthodox Church. The friends obtained permission to bury their loved ones in the quiet "God's acre" just outside the village.

The simple service in the home was ended; the funeral procession started. Its very simplicity, contrasted with the candles and millinery of an "Orthodox" burial, attracted the attention of the police.

They broke up the procession, tore the two bodies from the mourners, forced the friends to follow the corpses back to the home, and, addressing the sorrowing ones, exhorted them to return to the Orthodox Church, and have the priests to bury the dead, according to the rites of the dominant Church.

"Do what you like with these bodies, but until you leave the Baptists and return to the Orthodox Church they are not to be buried." The sequel was a midnight burial

Peasants and Prophets

far from the village churchyard, and imprisonment for six weeks to all who took part in an "illegal" assembly!

Persecution has ever been the means in God's hands of increasing the faith and strength of the believers, and bringing into the fold those who are led to inquire into the reason for such beatings and scourgings. So in S——, the disgraceful action of the police led to many coming to the services, with the result that the chapel was crowded with earnest hearers and anxious inquirers. The officials then prohibited the meetings because the chapel was too small to accommodate the worshippers, and in case of panic, injury might result to life and limb. The only way out of the difficulty was either to prohibit the people from attending the preaching of the Word, or to secure more land and erect a more commodious building. The latter course has been taken, and thus out of evil good has come. Well might the pastor declare: "On paper we

Perils and Persecutions

have freedom to worship God according to our faith and conscience, but in practice, bondage and imprisonment, beatings and scourgings, are our experience.”

But a brighter day is coming for our oppressed brethren. A simple sentence, spoken by an ex-prisoner and returned exile, after a morning spent in discussing illegal persecutions, should stimulate Baptists the world over: “By reason of the Baptist World Alliance, we can say to these persecuting police and reactionary Governors — ‘We are poor people, but we have the Baptists of the world behind us. We want to obey the laws of the land, but we remember that it is better to obey God than man.’”

Pavloff the Pioneer

THE name Pavloff is a household word in the homes of Baptists at all acquainted with the modern religious revival in Russia.

Born in 1854, he spent the first six years of his life in a Molokani village, Vorontzovka, some distance from Tiflis, removing to the latter city with his parents in 1860. At sixteen years of age he was brought into touch with a merchant named Voronia, who had been baptised in Russia by a Stundist, Martin Kalweit. Young Pavloff was thus converted and afterwards baptised in Tiflis. He early began to preach the Gospel, and frequently visited the villages around the capital city, with the result that many churches, or, as we should call them, mission stations, were established.

Pavloff the Pioneer

In 1875 Pavloff went to Hamburg, there to receive training in theology and Biblical subjects, that he might more effectively, "preach the Word." J. G. Oncken took a great interest in the young Russian, and placed him under the care of Mr. P. Willraht. After a short course of not more than eleven months, Oncken solemnly ordained our brother, and set him apart as a missionary to Russia, and Pavloff returned to Tiflis.

For ten years he regularly preached the Gospel in and around the city; hardly any obstacles were placed in his way, and the work grew amazingly, many hundreds being brought to the Lord and confessing Him in baptism. From Tiflis the work had spread throughout Transcaucasia, and even to the Transcaspian States.

All suddenly, in March, 1887, the "persecution" broke out, and Pavloff, with Voronia and others, was arrested and thrown in prison. For ten days he was in

Peasants and Prophets

the cells without trial, and still without any legal formalities, was banished to Orenburg. Chained by the wrists to criminals, he was marched through the city. The sensational arrest and banishment was made the occasion of a great demonstration, for more than a thousand Baptists and friends of the cause marched in procession behind the exiles to the outskirts of the city, with the result that the Church in Tiflis was practically depleted by the authorities banishing whole families into exile. For four years Pavloff was in Orenburg, and there preached upon every occasion. Upon the expiry of his sentence he returned home again, only to be brought before the police authorities, who tried to extract a promise from him not to preach again.

He refused to be silent, and was immediately banished again to Orenburg. In his own naïve way, he says: "This evidently was of the Lord, for on my return to Orenburg I had a great reaping time, baptising more

Pavloff the Pioneer

than 150 persons," and the work spread to the government of Ufa, where three churches were established. The Orthodox clergy in the city resented his presence and testimony there, and he was ordered to hold disputations with them in the students' seminary. In this way he was able, even in the presence of the Prefect himself, to bear his simple testimony to the Baptist faith, and thus many heard the glad tidings and were brought to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Whilst in exile he was bereft of wife and children, all dying within a fortnight from the dreaded Asiatic cholera.

Before leaving Orenburg he was married again to a devoted woman, who shared with him all the rigours and hardships incidental to the life of an exile.

Upon his release he was so bitterly persecuted that he at last fled across the frontier into the neighbouring kingdom of Roumania, and became the pastor of the Church in Tulcea. For six years he carried

Peasants and Prophets

on the work, preaching to Roumanians, Russians, Bulgarians, and Turks. A great revival followed his ministry, but the call of the homeland was too strong for him, and he returned in 1901 to his own city and recommenced work there.

South Russia is the cradle of "Stundism," as our Baptist brethren are designated by the Orthodox clergy, and in the government of Kherson there were many strong and flourishing churches. Unfortunately, these were led by men, the majority of whom were uneducated and illiterate, with the result that there were divisions amongst them, and novel practices were introduced, largely the result of misreading the Bible. In 1907 matters were brought to a crisis, and Pavloff left Tiflis and accepted the oversight of the work, making Odessa his headquarters.

In this flourishing seaport of 500,000 inhabitants, Pavloff has accomplished a great work. During his three years' ministry he has baptised 240 believers, and has



SISTERS CLAUDIA AND MARY.

To face p. 92.]

Pavloff the Pioneer

started work in Nicolaieff, Terespol, and Bendery, and in the capital of Bessarabia.

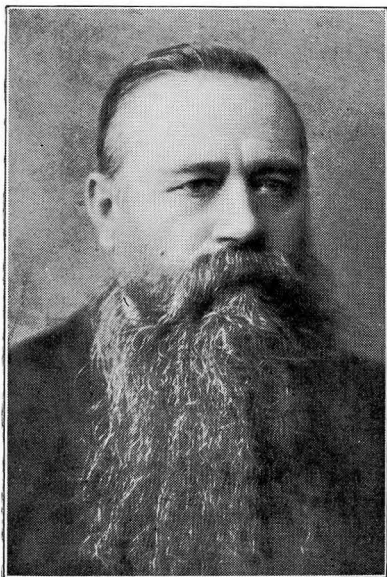
His exile days in Roumania gave him a large-hearted sympathy with that people, and he is anxious, when funds will permit, to commence work amongst the Roumanian settlers in Southern Russia. In his work he is assisted by the Rev. T. Timoschenko, son of one of the pioneer Baptists, and the two Sisters shown in the photo. Two years ago, these two friends, with two other hospital nurses, were baptised by our brother, the immediate result being that all four were dismissed from the hospital staff, and Pavloff was imprisoned for two months; but out of evil has come good, for our brother has now Claudia and Mary helping him amongst the sick and sorrowing members of his great and growing church.

The prayer hall seats six hundred people, and is crowded every Sunday, and hardly a week passes without many conversions. Altogether, Pavloff has been thrice in exile,

Peasants and Prophets

ten times in prison—the last occasion for sixty days—and recently has been fined fifty roubles for exposing a priest who flogged a Baptist sister, and 300 roubles for printing a letter from the Church at Aschabad appealing for help to meet the expenses of their prayer hall.

In spite of past and present persecutions, the worker is as indomitable as ever, and continues his labour in the sure hope that the “day of liberty” is at hand.



VASSILI PAYLOFF.



SIMON STEPANOFF.

[To face p. 95.]

An Early Pioneer

SIMON STEPANOFF was converted at twenty-one years of age, and, like the majority of Russian Baptists, he began immediately to tell of his own experience of the love of God in Christ Jesus. This soon brought him into conflict with the police and the rougher elements in his district. During the first twelve months of his Christian life, two attempts were made to assassinate him, but with indomitable courage he kept on his way. On one occasion, whilst preaching the Gospel with Brother Ivanoff as a companion, the police came into the room and broke up the meeting. The brethren were ordered to leave the village at once, so, harnessing their horses into the droshky, they made for Ivanoff's home, twelve versts away. During

Peasants and Prophets

the drive a blinding snowstorm came on, and although the road was a familiar one, they became bewildered, mistook their bearings, and realised that they were lost in the forest. Again and again they prayed for guidance, but apparently their prayers were unheeded; they could not strike the trail. The dawn of the second morning came before the well-known road was found again. Meanwhile the police had visited the village of Ivanoff, and had searched it thoroughly for the fugitive Baptists. Bayonets were thrust into the thatches of the houses; floors were lifted, granaries were ransacked, until at last the search was abandoned, and the police retired baffled. Upon the arrival of the brethren in the village, a meeting was held; practically all the adult inhabitants were present; conversions followed. Later in the year many were baptised, and at the present time one of the strongest churches in South Russia is to be found in this place. Stepanoff,

An Early Pioneer

quietly commenting upon his experience, said, "This was the first miracle God had wrought for me in answer to my prayer for His guidance." Our brother is only forty-six years of age, but his appearance would lead one to judge him to be at least sixty to sixty-five. For ten years after his conversion he was hunted by the police from village to village, and district to district; during these years it could be said of him that "he had no abiding city." During the last fifteen years he has been preaching the Gospel amongst the Cossacks, and has had the great joy of baptising more than a thousand converts upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Four times he has suffered imprisonment by "administrative order," and is even yet an exile from his own home. Thrice he has been called upon to sign a document promising not to preach the heretical Baptist doctrines, but he refuses to do so on the grounds that his Lord and Master has not yet withdrawn His command

Peasants and Prophets

to "preach the Gospel to every creature." He argues, "it is better to obey God rather than man." His cousin, brought to the Lord under his personal influence and teaching, a graduate of a Russian University, is at present an exile in far-off Siberia. Stepanoff's testimony is that right throughout the great provinces of Central and Southern Russia the peasants are eager and willing to listen to and embrace the Gospel of God in Jesus Christ.

A Russian Baptist Leader

I. S. PROKHANOFF is one of the men whom God has been silently preparing for the "new" times in Russia. To those who know him, he is placed by the side of Pavloff, Galaieff, Stepanoff, Fetler, and other pioneers working for the awakening of the Russian people to Evangelical Christianity and Baptist polity.

At the present time he is the leader in St. Petersburg of the Evangelical Christians (Free Baptists), numbering eight hundred and sixty members, with eleven places of worship, two ministers, and one missionary, besides other organisations and interests.

Prokhanoff was converted in the year 1887, at the Russian Baptist Church in

Peasants and Prophets

Vladikaukaz, whilst a student in that city. In the following year he came to St. Petersburg, and continued his studies in the Institute of Technology until the year 1893. During these formative years a great purpose was growing in his heart. "Russia, some day, will have religious liberty; when that day comes, men will be wanted who are acquainted with the religious life of other lands, who have been brought into contact with the Free Church life and thought of free countries, who have sat at the feet of the leading teachers and professors of Biblical and theological science." Many will remember Mr. Prokhanoff in the Bristol Baptist College, during the years 1895-6. Following upon his course there, he attended classes in the New College, London, and passed thence to Berlin University, and continued his theological studies in the Facultie de Theologie Protestante in Paris.

During these years of preparation his

A Russian Baptist Leader

father was in Transcaucasia, exiled for his faith, and our friend, being without a passport, found it difficult, if not impossible, to return to his own land.

However, in December, 1898, he travelled to Constantinople, announced himself as a Russian subject without a passport, and was arrested. He was sent to Odessa, and from thence to his native town of Vladikaukaz.

The Governor of the province, who had been in office when Mr. Prokhanoff was persecuted and his father sent into exile, had been dismissed from his post, with the result that the case had been forgotten, and our friend set at liberty.

In 1899 Mr. Prokhanoff obtained a post in the Technical Institute at Riga, as one of the Professors of Science, but two years later he was dismissed by order of the Minister of the Interior, "being a leader of Stundists."

St. Petersburg now became his home for a second time; here he laboured as a

Peasants and Prophets

mechanical engineer, devoting all his spare hours to spiritual work, and furthering the interests of the Kingdom of God.

His record of work in St. Petersburg is a remarkable one, especially when one bears in mind that with the Apostle Paul he can say: "These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me."

He was the founder, and is still the editor, of the first Russian Evangelical periodical, *The Christian*, conducted on the same lines as the familiar weekly in our own country; the first political Nonconformist weekly, *The Morning Star*, in which political, social, ethical, economic, and scientific questions of the day are dealt with from the Free Evangelical standpoint; and the first Russian periodical for the Christian young people, *The Young Vineyard*.

In connection with this literary work there has been established a printing house, a book store on one of the finest streets in

A Russian Baptist Leader

the City, and a publishing house called *The Rainbow*.

From the publication department there have been issued five hymn-books edited by our brother (he is the composer of about one hundred and fifty hymns, besides translations from English, German, and French hymnals).

He started the first Evangelical school for the education of the children, and has now four schools in different parts of the city. These were the first schools allowed by the Government for the education of Nonconformist children.

For the young men Mr. Prokhanoff conducts a Bible school, in which he lectures on "The Introduction to the Old and New Testaments," Exegesis, and Homiletics.

That our brother's ideals and aims for the welfare and redemption of Russia may be realised I am sure is the wish of every true Baptist and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Vasilia Ivanovitch Ivanoff

THE Molokans, or sect of the milk drinkers, of South Russia, have given some of the finest of their members to the Russian Baptist Church.

Pavloff of Odessa, Golaieff of Balashov (President of the Russian Baptist Union), Basil Stepanoff of Petch, and the subject of this sketch, Vasilia Ivanovitch Ivanoff, were all born Molokani.

Ivanoff was born in 1848, in the government of Elisabethpol, close to the Caucasian territory. At twenty-two he was brought into touch with the early pioneer Baptists, and was baptised on October 21, 1870, in the turbulent river flowing by the city of Tiflis. He was early aflame with

Vasilia Ivanovitch Ivanoff

a passionate zeal for the Gospel, and began to preach and to testify wherever and whenever he could *make* opportunity.

Persecution was not long in coming to him, and he had to experience the discipline of "prisons oft." For many months he was arrested upon various pretexts every Saturday, and kept in "durance vile" until Monday noon, the authorities thus seeking to prevent his meeting with the Baptist community on the Lord's Day. In the "kamera" of the prison he found many openings for conversation with his fellow-prisoners upon spiritual things, and scores of men and women in Russia to-day owe their conversion and experience of the new birth to the "week-ender."

The year 1884 will long be remembered by the Baptists in South Russia. Homes were broken up, prisons were crowded, children were torn from their parents and placed in monasteries and nunneries, and the exile convoys had their quota of

Peasants and Prophets

believers on the way to Siberia and Transcaucasia. Ivanoff was banished to the latter place for four years, and at the expiration of his sentence was deprived of all civil rights. Returning to Tiflis he was without a passport, and at great risk he travelled throughout the villages, comforting the women and children whose husbands and fathers were in prison or exile, and preaching wherever he could meet with three or four persons in secret. During these journeys he met with Kostromin the Cossack, and Simon Stepanoff, now of Moscow. This itinerant ministry continued until the year 1895, when he was arrested in a village gathering, and after spending six months in prison without trial, was banished by "administrative order" to Transcaucasia. Half his head and beard were shaven, chains were riveted to wrists and ankles, and he was sent with the criminal gangs. For four months he was treated little better than a beast of burden;

Vasilia Ivanovitch Ivanoff

with fifteen other men he was chained to a treadmill, and for eight hours every day he had to grind corn for his fellow-convicts.

Twelve years ago he returned from exile and commenced a great ministry in Baku. Here, amongst Tartars, Kurds, Turks, Armenians, as well as Russians, he preaches the Gospel. He has a church of more than 300 members, has baptised as many as eighty at one time, and since commencing work in the "oil city" has immersed more than 1,500 upon profession of faith.

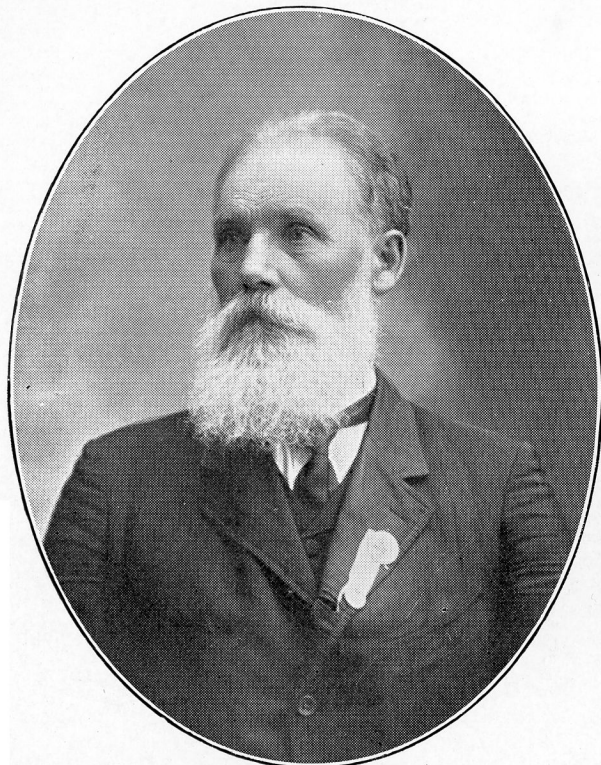
Two years ago a tremendous blow was struck at him, for his only son, whilst passing from the church to his father's home, was assassinated, and the grandchildren have fallen to the preacher's charge.

Although exile and imprisonment are experiences of the past, he still has to suffer many petty persecutions, such as only a *tchinovick* can devise, but through all the years of his Christian life he has stood

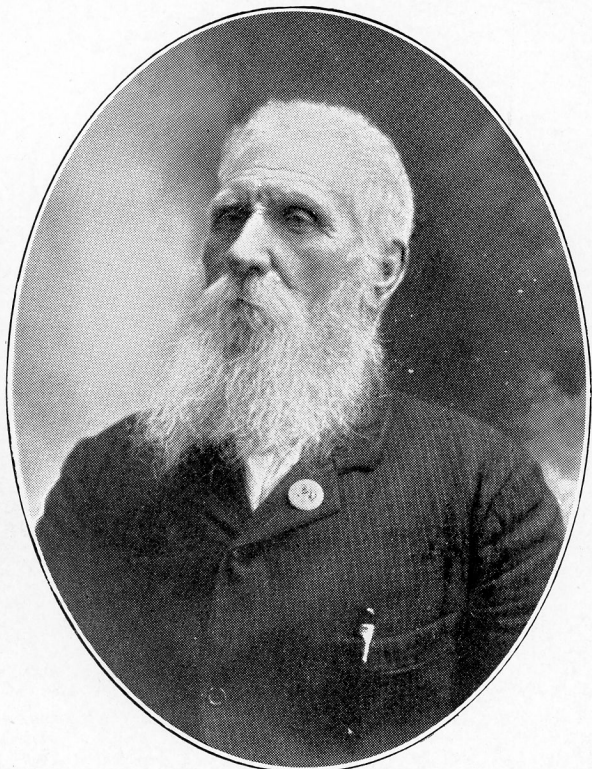
Peasants and Prophets

firmly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.

Only the recording angel can ever know how wide the reach of the influence of this faithful and fearless servant of Jesus Christ has been. Men like Feodor Petrovitch Kostromin, Simon Stepanoff, Ivan Kuchnireff, Andreas Erstratenko (at present in Siberia), and other Baptist leaders all trace their conversion to the quiet influence, prayerful preaching, and steadfast faithfulness of this prematurely aged servant of the Lord Jesus.



VASILIA IVANOVITCH IVANOFF.



FEODOR PETROVITCH KOSTROMIN.

Feodor the Cossack

I MET him first in Moscow, under the walls of the Kremlin; the place and time were well suited to such a meeting. He was above the average in height, and massively built. As he strode along, his erect and lithe figure indicated that he had served the "Little Father" for many years in the army ranks. "Old soldier" was stamped upon him even as he walked. Strength and gentleness were strangely blended in every line of his fine and mobile features. His snowy beard and long white locks gave to him the appearance of a venerable patriarch. He was a man whom one would involuntarily turn round and look upon as he passed by. The

Peasants and Prophets

humorous light in his eyes, his warm embrace—one could almost feel one's ribs giving way under the pressure of his strong arms — his fervent greeting, went immediately to my heart: he won me altogether in a moment.

We travelled together from Moscow to Warsaw, and on the long journey he was continually thinking and planning for my convenience. As soon as ever the train pulled up at a station, he was invariably the first to jump from the car, and with a rush would make for the restaurant, speedily returning with his tin can filled with fragrant tea. Sometimes a loaf of rye bread and a pickled cucumber would accompany the liquid refreshment, and we would, with much merry-making, picnic in our corner of the compartment.

His age baffled me. His appearance suggested that at least four-score summers had passed and gone since he first saw the light of day, but his movements were

Feodor the Cossack

those of a much younger man. I was not surprised to learn that he was only sixty-five years of age.

What had prematurely aged him? As a Cossack he had been used from his earliest days to a free and open-air life; as a soldier he had fought against his country's enemies in the war for the liberation of Bulgaria from the tyranny of the Turk; after his army service he had lived upon his own farm, and was prospering exceedingly; but as a Baptist he had been beaten, scourged, imprisoned, and exiled. For sixteen years he had been tormented, afflicted, treated with contumely and scorn, looked upon as the very off-scouring of humanity, because, in the simplicity of his heart and soul, he, amidst much tribulation, remained faithful to the Lord who had redeemed him.

Converted at thirty-eight years of age, whilst in the full vigour of his manhood, he immediately began to preach to his

Peasants and Prophets

fellow-Cossacks the wonderful tidings of God's love. For three years he carried on this propaganda work without let or hindrance, but at last the success attending his labours attracted the attention of the authorities, and he was arrested and imprisoned. For three months he was in "durance vile" without trial, and upon his release he continued his ministry, with the result that he was again incarcerated. Whilst in the prison "kamera" he took the opportunity to witness to Jesus Christ, and was rejoiced to know that several of his fellow-prisoners had found peace in believing. For three years he was more often in prison than at liberty, and during this time of trial his good wife stood faithfully by his side, and helped in the work.

On May 14, 1890, he was arrested, and brought before the High Court, and tried for the heinous offence of preaching the Baptist doctrine. The judge was very severe upon him, and sentenced him to the loss of

Feodor the Cossack

all civil rights, the special privileges which he enjoyed as an ex-Cossack soldier, to the confiscation of all his property—about 500 roubles—and to banishment with the criminal gangs to Transcaucasia.

Immediately after the sentence was pronounced upon him, in accordance with the usual Russian fashion, half his hair and beard were shaven off, he was clothed in the convict grey, and taken to the blacksmith's shop for the leg-fetters and chains to be riveted upon him. For nine months, day and night, in railway trains, marching upon the roads across the mountains, standing, walking, sleeping, he always had to bear the weight (about 18lbs.) of the chains. Even until this present day he carries the marks of his fetters where the iron fretted and galled him. On the dreary march from Vladikavzas he was manacled to criminals of the vilest type, time and again he was urged to recant, he was beaten and scourged for his obstinacy, but neither peaceful nor

Peasants and Prophets

brutal persuasions had any effect upon his determination to serve the Lord Jesus.

To add to the diabolical horror of his position, his wife and children were not allowed to accompany him into exile, but the woman was banished northwards to Siberia, and his eight children were scattered amongst the monasteries of the Greek Orthodox Church; no two of them were in one place, and each was ignorant of the destination of the others.

Nothing in the story of the Spanish Inquisition—rack or thumb-screw, falling water upon bare soles, or gradually encircling walls, slimy pits or rat-infested cells—could excel the torture of being separated from all that one holds dear, more especially from one's little children, not knowing where they are, or what is happening to them.

For nine long, weary years no message or word reached him concerning the well-being or otherwise of his dear ones. Daily

Feodor the Cossack

he had to appear before the officer of the police and report himself, and every morning he pleaded for news of those near and dear to him, but the hearts of the officials were as hard as adamant. No information was vouchsafed to him, and no message was allowed to reach him; they were deaf to all his appeals. Sometimes, like John in prison, he had his doubting moments, and wondered if such a great sacrifice was demanded of him. To speak the word, give his promise not to preach, to return to the Greek Oorthodox Church, would mean liberty, freedom, and return to his loved ones; at times the temptation was keen and severe. Poverty and brutality, insufficient clothing and food, at last told upon his magnificent physique, and he was brought into "the valley of the shadow of death." For some weeks his life was despaired of, and he begged again and again that his wife might be brought to him to help him in his dire necessity. Brutal and

Peasants and Prophets

revolting words were hurled at him, and his request was refused. Slowly health began to return, and before he was fully convalescent he was removed to another settlement yet farther away from the centre of "civilisation." Before leaving his first place of exile he had had the joy of leading many of his fellows to Jesus Christ, and had secretly baptised some fifty or more upon profession of faith in Jesus. A little church was thus formed in the exile community, a church visited by the renowned and apostolic Dr. Baedeker.

In the new settlement Kostromin again and again pressed to be allowed to have his wife with him. Petition after petition was sent to St. Petersburg, until at last his importunate pleading was heard, and his wife and three eldest sons were allowed to meet him—on condition that he and they left Russia for ever.

He petitioned and prayed that he might have his other children; he was prepared

Feodor the Cossack

to submit to any decree, if only the family so rudely scattered could be re-united once more; but all his appeals were in vain. With a great sorrow in his heart, not only for his children but for the country which he loved so dearly, he commenced the long journey to Roumania, and was there joined by his wife and three sons. In Tulcea he became a member of that brave community of Russian Baptist exiles, and from thence visited the brethren scattered abroad for the faith.

Later, he went to Burgas, on the Black Sea, one of the Bulgarian ports, and there worked with his hands for a living, and preached the Gospel to the Russian exiles, political and civil, resident in the town. In 1908, whilst on a visit to the Balkan States, I called and saw the work commenced by our brother, little thinking that in three years I was to have the privilege of his company for many weeks in train and on steamer.

Peasants and Prophets

Seven years passed away in this milder form of exile. Many fruitless attempts were made by him to recover his lost children, and a highly-placed friend in St. Petersburg, a Baptist, petitioned the Dowager-Empress on his behalf, but the intercession was in vain. A second petition was then drawn up; the fact that he had been a soldier of the Cossack Guard, had fought against the Turk, was used, and the powerful interest of the Dowager-Empress was enlisted on his behalf, with the result that he was allowed to return to Russia.

He obtained a passport and returned to Rostoff on the Don, and to his great joy discovered that during his long absence his brother and family had been brought into touch with Simon Stepanoff, now of Moscow, and under his ministry had given their hearts to Jesus Christ. "The news of my brother's conversion brought more joy to me than if I had had 10,000 roubles given to me."

Feodor the Cossack

Being without civil rights, he could only remain in Russia for six months, and soon after his arrival he commenced a weary round of enquiries, from police bureau to police bureau, searching for his children. Although influential friends were enlisted on his behalf, no tidings reached him, and at last the quest was given up as in vain.

The time for his departure from Russia was at hand; with a heavy heart he began his preparations for a return to Bulgaria, when tidings were brought to him that the present Tsar had signed a *ukase* restoring to him his civil rights and permitting him to become once again a Russian citizen. For the sake of the people of Russia still needing the evangelical message he accepted the offer, and chose the port of Nicolaieff as his future home. Here he removed and commenced to labour for the Master, with the result that in the short space of three years he has gathered a church about him, and is rapidly becom-

Peasants and Prophets

ing a mighty power for the Baptist cause in the Taurida.

That peace may be his portion during his declining years is the least of all blessings we may wish for this good and fearless soldier of Jesus Christ.

Saints in Siberia

LIKE "Saul of Tarsus," Andreas Erstratenko as a young man found delight in, and thought that he was doing God's service by, beating and stoning those who worshipped the Father in any wise differing from his own method. He was born at Balashov, in the province of Saratov, in 1863. As a member of the Greek Orthodox community, he hated with virulence all those who had become "heretics." When word was passed round the town that four Baptists had arrived, and were staying in the house of a friend of theirs, he organised a number of young men, and broke up the gathering by stone-throwing, window-breaking, and general violence. Every attempt to spread the

Peasants and Prophets

“doctrine” was resisted with vigour and bitterness.

In the spring of 1890, Vassili Ivanoff visited Balashov, and in common with his predecessors, he was stoned and maltreated by the young men led by Erstratenko. Something in the quiet dignity of the preacher appealed to the persecutor, and after several private interviews, Erstratenko was convinced of the truth of the Baptist doctrine and became an eager inquirer. The following year witnessed his baptism and formal admission into the Baptist community.

Shortly after his baptism, six families, out of eleven, in the church were banished to Siberia, and Andreas became the leader of those still at liberty. A few months afterwards the remainder, with their leader, were imprisoned for two years by “administrative order,” *i.e.*, without trial. During their imprisonment they suffered many stripes, and were deprived of things

Saints in Siberia

commonly allowed to ordinary prisoners. Upon their release from gaol, they were arrested every time they met for worship, and were fined from 20 to 40 roubles (£2 to £4), until they were absolutely penniless.

This persecution continued for more than twelve months, until at last the brethren, having nothing more to lose, began to meet boldly in the daytime, with the inevitable result that beatings, scourgings, and imprisonment followed. During this period of trial the mother of Erstratenko, a recent convert, was so mercilessly flogged that several of her ribs were broken, and she died in three days, a martyr to the faith.

With three brethren he was preaching in an adjacent village, when all four were so brutally beaten that all unconscious they were laid in the bottom of a farm waggon, and brought home more dead than alive.

After many imprisonments, he was in 1893 sent to Siberia for twelve years, and upon receiving his liberty in 1905, he

Peasants and Prophets

decided to remain in the country, and was brought into touch with G. Mazaieff, of Omsk, Siberia, who greatly helped him. He became the minister of the Baptist exiles settled upon the latter's estate, and from that centre began to itinerate throughout the country south of the Baikal.

He has been privileged by God to baptise many political exiles, and during his ministry in Siberia has immersed more than 2,500 men and women, and is at present the "pastor" of many scattered churches embracing more than 6,000 members.

Many and varied are his experiences as a minister of the Gospel. His journeys often involve a distance of 2,000 versts, over waste wilderness and through dark forests. He has baptised at midnight, cutting a hole in the ice for a baptistery when the thermometer was below 40° centigrade.

So successful has been the ministry of Erstratenko and his brother exiles that

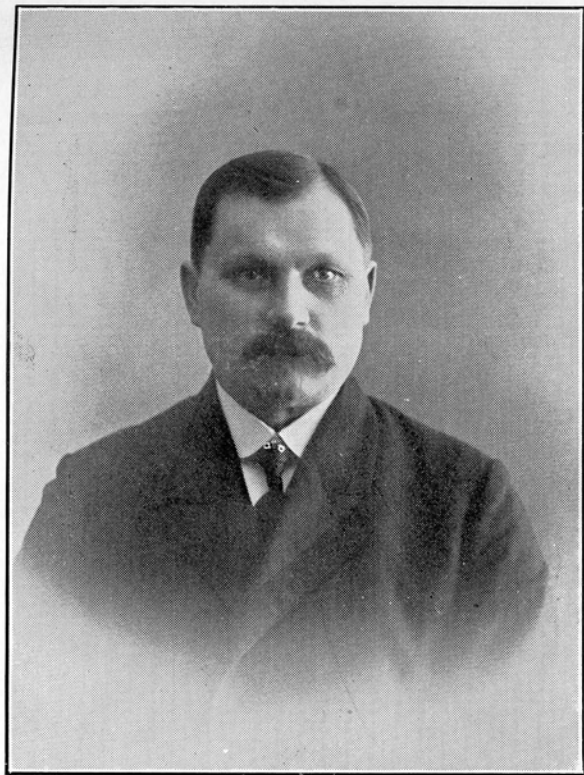
Saints in Siberia

around Omsk as many as half the villagers in that great district are now members of the Baptist church, whilst in the latter city there is a fine Baptist church seating 2,000 worshippers, built and furnished by G. Mazaieff as a thank-offering to the Lord for His great goodness and mercy to the forced dwellers in Siberia.

Like the early Apostles, "Andreas" receives no salary for his manifold labours, but is the welcome guest in hundreds of homes, a brother beloved in all the churches.

Podin and the Prisoners

RUSSIA is a land of paradox. Consistency in the administration of her laws is practically unknown. Especially is this to be noted in the laws governing the non-orthodox communities. According to a recent *ukase* every man has granted to him the liberty to believe as he wills, subject to the general welfare of the community, and under certain restrictions, mainly political in origin and object, may join any sect which he may favour; but on no consideration whatever may he be guilty of the heinous offence of proselytising, unless from a non-orthodox sect to the Holy Catholic Church. Fetler can build and open a great house of prayer in St. Petersburg even whilst he is under bail to appear before the Court in Moscow to



ADAM K. PODIN.

To face p. 126.]



ANDREAS ERSTRATENKO.

Podin and the Prisoners

answer the charge of baptising converts in the ancient capital.

A pastor may receive converts into his church, but he must not preach with a view to converting any of his hearers. He may baptise converts, but must not proclaim distinctive Baptist doctrines and principles.

It is a well-known and amply verified fact that thousands of Baptists have suffered the loss of goods, beatings and scourgings, imprisonment, and exile for their faith, but it is not so well known that the same Government which prosecutes Baptists actually facilitates the work of a Baptist preacher in ministering to prisoners and exiles, political, criminal, and religious.

Adam K. Podin, the Russian prisoners' friend, is the God-equipped man for the work. He is nearly fifty years of age, a splendid linguist, at home with seven languages, tall in stature and broad in

Peasants and Prophets

build, overflowing with the milk of human kindness, strong in faith, gentle in speech, quiet in demeanour, but with a personality felt by all who come into contact with him.

Born in Lithuania in 1862, he received a good education, and upon reaching his majority became a schoolmaster under the Russian Government.

His career as a teacher came to an abrupt conclusion upon his conversion in the year 1889. Following his dismissal from office he came to England in the same year on a visit to friends in London, and after a few months in this country he returned home and was baptised by Baron Stackelberg, pastor of the church in Kegel.

Under the supervision of the Baron, Podin commenced to preach and evangelise in the villages around Kegel, and gradually extended his ministry by occasional preaching tours into Esthonia.

Later he returned to London and spent

Podin and the Prisoners

some time in the Missionary Training Home at Drayton Park, N. At the conclusion of his studies he returned to Kegel, where he succeeded Baron Stackelberg in the pastorate in the year 1900, which office he still holds in addition to his special prison work.

Seven years ago a highly-placed official in St. Petersburg, a Baptist, approached him with a request that he should visit the prisons throughout the northern part of the Russian Empire, including the exile settlements in Siberia. Upon Podin acceding to the request, the necessary papers were obtained granting him permission to hold Gospel services in the prisons, exile settlements, and *etapes*, the latter on the great Siberian road. In addition to his services as preacher he had placed at his disposal several thousand copies of the New Testament for free distribution amongst the prisoners and convicts met with on his journeys.

Peasants and Prophets

On one journey in the spring of 1911 he distributed no fewer than 3,400 New Testaments in seven different languages.

Many and varied are his experiences. Long and arduous journeys have to be taken; train, steamer, and droshky are all necessary to his work, and ofttimes he has been in peril from storm and flood; but the visible results of his work more than compensate him for his wearing and fatiguing labours.

At Perm, the great exile forwarding station, from whence the convict convoys start almost daily on their way to Siberia, the Prison Inspector, after examining Podin's papers, not only promised to help him, but invited the preacher to be his house guest during his stay in the town.

Altogether there were more than 6,000 prisoners awaiting their turn for the road.

The Inspector impressed upon his visitor that in speaking to the convicts he would be addressing men who probably would

Podin and the Prisoners

never see Russia proper again. The Governor assembled the men in groups, and the first day was spent with 180 men, all manacled and fettered, sentenced to life transportation, destined for the gold-mines beyond the Urals. As he spoke to them of the Risen Christ tears streamed down the cheeks of many, and the Word preached in such strange surroundings and with great simplicity, reached the hearts of men about to commence their long tramp along the "highway of sorrow" into the "land of death."

The second day was devoted to 800 men, all manacled, sentenced to twenty years' exile, leaving the following day for the Amur, there to help build a branch railway as forced labourers. In introducing Podin to his audience the Governor said: "These men will never return; the majority will die before they complete the first five years of their service. They have to travel thousands of versts, through forests and

Peasants and Prophets

across deserts where there is no human habitation. They will have to toil hard without a friend to cheer them, and devoid of human sympathy. Speak to their hearts as you would speak to dying men, for such they are."

The third day was given to the women convicts, of whom more than 200 were gathered together in one group. Many of them were quite young girls, some fresh from their classes in the University; young women going into exile for the crime of loving their fellow-beings too well and seeking their material and moral welfare in a manner contrary to the regulations of the Central Government.

So the days passed by until more than 6,000 men and women had been reached, the majority of them gladly accepting the gift of a New Testament.

On that same journey Podin visited a prison high up in the Ural Mountains. The Governor was more than courteous,

Podin and the Prisoners

and assisted the preacher all that he possibly could. On the Sunday 1,000 men were assembled, and after service leave was given for personal interviews with those impressed during the service. Space fails one in which to write of this work in detail; the magnitude of it is beyond calculation, and an effectual and open door is before our brother.

One service will always be vividly in his memory. Before meeting a group of men the Governor informed him that fifteen of his hearers were to be shot on the following morning; their identity was hidden from the preacher; the men themselves were unaware of the fate awaiting them with the rising of the morrow's sun.

Podin, speaking of that service, described to me his agony for the souls of that company, and as he looked into the eyes of the men, watching the effect of his words, he prayed for his congregation as never before, and although it was winter, the

Peasants and Prophets

perspiration rolled off him in his vehement desire for their salvation.

At times he has as many as forty small gatherings in one day, and the fatigue of the work tells upon him; the strain is severe, but having heard the Master's call to this great work, he cannot turn back. The prayers and sympathy of God's people should be for Adam K. Podin, the successor of John Howard, the prisoners' friend, who died for Russian prisoners at Kherson in the South of Russia.

The History of a Hero

BROTHER PRAMENCHOFF is only fifty-six years of age, but his hair and beard are grey, and his appearance leads one to think that he has passed the three-score years and ten of the Psalmist. There was hardly another man in the Russian Baptist Congress of 1910 who had such a record.

Baptised in 1884, he immediately began to preach the Gospel. Thus was he brought into conflict with the authorities. Twice his house and goods were utterly destroyed, thrice was he beaten until the blood streamed down his back, and unconsciousness alone stayed the hands of his flagellator.

Imprisonment followed his beating, but the hero was undaunted. At last he was

Peasants and Prophets

sent into exile by "administrative order"—*i.e.*, without trial. Two years later he was liberated, and returned home to preach again. In a week he was in a prison cell, and finally was exiled for life to the far-off, dreaded Siberia.

For seven and a-half months he never had his chains off, day or night. He was compelled to work with the lowest and vilest criminals. In the providence of God, the birth of an heir to the Tsar brought about his liberty, after the lapse of fourteen years. On leaving exile he was not provided with shoes, and he had to walk 264 versts bare-footed over the frozen ground.

Altogether he has been fifty-two times in prison, having sampled the interiors of no less than twenty-one gaols. Even now he is forbidden to return to his native place, and has had all civil rights taken away from him.

In reply to a question from me, he said: "The love of Jesus Christ more than com-

The History of a Hero

pensates me for all I have endured. I thank my God that He counts me worthy to suffer for the sake of the Kingdom of God."

In one prison he preached to his fellow-captives, with the result that nine brethren were converted, one of whom is now pastor of the Church in Tambov, whilst the other eight are serving their Lord in the far-off exile camps in Siberia.

In one prison the chief warder was converted, and facilities were granted to Pramenchoff to preach the Gospel, with the result that there were many conversions.

At another time an Orthodox priest came to convert him, and this was to be accomplished in the presence of the prison officials, their wives, and the prisoners. Our brother preached from John iii. 14-16, Rom. v. 1, and Rom. viii. 1. Several were converted as a result of this attempt to convert him, and during the remaining time of his incarceration he was used of God to the bringing of many to

Peasants and Prophets

conviction of sin, repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ. Some time ago a priest announced that he was going to preach a sermon and confound the Baptists. Our brother went to the church, and was recognised. The priest ordered him to withdraw; he refused. The priest would not proceed with his sermon until soldiers were sent for and he was expelled from the building. Result—much excitement, and a Gospel service just outside the building, a service attended by the congregation gathered together to hear the ignorant (?) Baptist preacher put to confusion.

With such men labouring in Russia, is it any wonder that the work of the Lord is progressing by leaps and bounds?

God is using the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. His hand is over all.

The Triumph of Faith

BROTHER PINKOFF is a sturdy, stalwart son of Russia, forty-eight years of age. Nearly twenty years ago he began to read the New Testament with a desire to discover the truth, with the natural result that he was converted, and subsequently baptised. As is frequently the way with Russian converts, our friend began to work for his Master immediately. Ultimately, he became the pastor of a village church in the government of Samara. His work was attended with success, and the result was an outburst of persecution against him. He was pursued from village to village, until at last he was arrested and thrust into prison.

For two long years he waited in prison for the commencement of his trial, until at last a friend intervened on his behalf,

Peasants and Prophets

stood bond for his due appearance at the Court of Justice, and, after the lapse of twelve months, he was brought before the judge.

For the crime of preaching the Gospel and baptising converts from the Orthodox Church, Pinkoff was sentenced to twelve years' exile in the Caucasus.

For five months he was chained hands and feet, the half of his head was shaven, and he was put to work with the criminal gangs. Amongst his fellow-prisoners he found those willing and even eager to hear the Gospel message, with the result that more than thirty men were converted.

He was subsequently banished further south still, amongst the Kurds and Armenians. Here, after a while, he learned enough of their language to point them to Jesus Christ, and a church was formed. In common with scores of exiles and prisoners for the sake of the Gospel, the birth of the Tsarevitch brought to him freedom. He

The Triumph of Faith

returned to Samara and recommenced work there. Again and again he was called upon to stand for his principles, being imprisoned no fewer than twelve times for preaching the Gospel. Whilst in exile two separate offers were made to him that if he would but recant and submit to the Orthodox faith he could be immediately set at liberty. His answer was: "I am not ready to deny my Baptist principles for the sake of a little persecution."

Amongst those who have been converted through his preaching there are many who have been called upon to suffer terribly for their faith.

Beatings, scourgings, imprisonments, and exile have all their terrors, but the most fiendish punishment of all has been the taking away of the children from their parents and placing them in monasteries and convents, oftentimes in districts of Russia far away from their native villages, thus making a reunion almost impossible.

Religious Liberty (?) in Russia

I N October, 1910, M. Stolypin, Minister of the Interior, sanctioned the rules to be observed at the religious meetings of sectarians. Accompanied by a special memorandum, these rules have been sent to all the Provincial Governors. It is declared that "sectarian meetings held for worship and prayer may be conducted without hindrance in temples or rooms for prayer, or other premises constructed by permission. No special permit from or intimation to the local authority is necessary." This sounds well enough. Unfortunately, some "explanatory" points follow, which take away all the lustre of the fundamental regulation. Notwithstanding the absolutely plain declaration that no "intimation to the local authority is necessary," it is further

Religious Liberty (?) in Russia

stipulated that the police must be given knowledge beforehand, and may not later than within three days prohibit the meeting, at the same time giving reasons for the prohibition. It is further underlined that all sectarian meetings summoned for any purpose other than prayer and worship are not allowed without a special police permit.

It is clear, therefore, that practically these meetings are placed under the control of the police, who have to decide whether the proceedings at a given gathering are really worship and prayer or not. It may, by the way, be remarked that such a control cannot be exercised without the presence of the police at the meetings. In other words, the sectarians have to admit the police to their worship whenever the latter demand admission. That what has just been said about the future working of the rules is not mere guesswork may be seen from the following telegram of October 19 (November 1), from Simferopol, which appeared in the Russian

Peasants and Prophets

papers:—"According to the order of the Minister of the Interior, sectarian meetings and discussions on religious subjects have been prohibited here. The sectarians are allowed to meet exclusively for common prayer."

A congregation of Baptists in the province of Kherson lodged their declaration on April 8, 1908. Instead of either registering the congregation or declining to do so within a month, the Board kept the declaration for nine months, when the congregation complained to the Minister of the Interior. Two more months passed, when the ministerial reply came that the registration had not been effected because the applicants had not paid the stamp duty, and because the applicants "could not be found." Now, be it noted, in the first place, that nothing about paying stamp duty is to be found in the law on sectarian congregations, and that all the fifty-seven persons who "could not be found" gave their

Religious Liberty (?) in Russia

addresses in the application itself and had not moved their residences. The applicants paid the stamp duty, in spite of its being illegal, and then, after eighteen months in all of red-tapeism, the registration was declined without reasons being assigned.

The law requires at least fifty persons to form a congregation. The expression seems to be clear enough, but the inveterate animosity to liberty in any form has contrived to make the word "person" a pretext for non-registration. Fifty-nine Baptists of Vladikaukaz applied for registration. The Provincial Administrative Board, after a scrutiny of the signatures, found that nineteen of them were those of women, who, according to that official institution, were not "persons." The applicants lodged complaints with the Senate and Minister of the Interior, but up to January 1, 1910, neither had replied, while the Local Board declined on the same ground to register several congregations in the meantime. The con-

Peasants and Prophets

gregation of Khasan-yurt could not be dismissed on the same ground, so the same Administrative Board invented another defect. They found that nine out of fifty-four signatories, though adults, were not yet twenty-five years of age, and this the Board thought an obstacle to registration, although there is not a word of such a provision in the law. This reason was applied with similar results to several other congregations. They all appealed to the Senate and the Minister of the Interior, and all without avail.

In the *ukase* of November 17, 1906, the legislator speaks throughout of "sectarians who have dissented from Orthodoxy." That is quite natural if we consider that the main concern of the Russian Government in religious matters is to support the State Church. Up to 1904 all the dissenters from Orthodoxy were considered as culprits. About the change of faith in other Christian denominations the Government did not con-

Religious Liberty (?) in Russia

cern itself. Consequently, when it was resolved to inaugurate an "era of liberty of conscience," the legislator's attention was naturally fixed on the liberty of the Orthodox to change their faith. The right of seceding from other religions went without saying, but since the wave of reaction rose higher, this expression has been used officially as a pretext for non-registration. Thus, among seventy-eight persons of the province of Volyn who, as Baptists, applied to the Local Board for the registration of their congregation, the officials found two persons who had been Roman Catholics and one former Lutheran. Since they were not dissenters *from the Orthodox faith*, the registration was declined. The Baptists, of course, appealed to the Senate, but received no reply for two years. Needless to say, this was not the only case in which the non-registration was based on the same ground.

Such illustrations of Ministerial double-

Peasants and Prophets

dealing might be prolonged *ad libitum*. But is it really necessary? Is it not quite clear, from what has already been said, that the Tsar's Government never seriously meant to establish religious liberty, and is now trying to cripple and altogether abolish, by administrative measure, that "toleration" of which it still preserves the label, so convenient for foreign use?

“The Session of the Heretics”

THE growth of the Baptist forces in Russia has awakened in the breasts of many a blind rage and passionate fury against the movement. On Saturday, September 17, 1910, the *Novoe Vremya* published a bitter and misleading attack upon the whole movement:

“These Baptists are decadents; they are descending from the heights of civilisation granted to men, and are returning to primitive forms of society. This is a mere fashion. Why should we discard our fine clothes and deny ourselves the good things of life, in order to imitate poor foreigners? All these heretics think that they are after true beauty, but they are wrong. As in art, politics, and commerce, so in religion, any

Peasants and Prophets

return to things which have gone before is a sure sign of decadence.

“ I respect every religious feeling, but I still prefer the Orthodox Church, even though it may have some defects about it. The Orthodox Church is just as good as Catholicism, Mohammedanism, or Buddhism, because it is a mature growth suited to the Russian national character. These Baptists are as geometrical figures compared with the rugged mountains for beauty.

“ This return to the primitive is mere decadence. These Baptists think that they are returning to evangelical faith. They are not; they are merely returning to the Bible. They are Bible Christians—that is, Jews.

“ If you listen attentively to their prayers, sermons, and addresses, you will notice one strong point—they acknowledge Jesus Christ, but they worship Jehovah, the Hebrew God of the Old Testament.

“ The Session of the Heretics ”

“ They do this in their ignorance, thinking that the Bible is of Hebrew origin, whereas it is merely Babylonian, and this is what holds the upper hand of these Baptists. They are loyal to the Old Testament, but ignore the Gospels. They prefer the Old Testament of the Jews to the New Testament of modern civilisation.

“ The Government are much to blame. The Government made a great mistake, under the pretext of religious liberty, to give such power to this sect. The Government has many enemies, and can afford to ignore them whilst they are scattered units, but it should not allow them to come together and thus grow as rapidly as clouds bearing a thunderous aspect. These Baptists in secret have a deadly hate against the State, and are therefore the enemies of the Russian people. It is false for them to declare that their aim is the salvation of souls. They do not care for the fatherland; they are merely Jewish Christians. They

Peasants and Prophets

are strangers to the country; they dream of a return to Canaan, to a New Jerusalem, a dream state of humanity.

“Leave these people to grow, and when they are strong they will undermine the State.

“The masses of Russia have been kept in subjection to one religion, made part of the one soul of the nation, and to accomplish this much blood has been spilt. These Protestants have caused the spilling of blood, and a reign of terror in Germany, France, and England, terrors impossible to describe.

“We have crushed heresies in our time to preserve the unity of the nation. Must we be compelled to try this dangerous experiment again?

“The Orthodox Church is shattered by Nihilism, and has lost her hold upon the upper classes. Can she afford to lose her hold upon the masses by the presence of these decadents in our midst?

“The Session of the Heretics”

“It is true they do not carry into the region of their faith heathenish practices, but rather Jewish. This must not be allowed, even though it means the shedding of blood.”