

ART. VI.—THE MOVEMENT IN MEXICO.

1. *The Work of the Church in Mexico: Timely Words from several Bishops.* New York: Whittaker, 2, Bible House.
2. *The Reformation in Mexico.* By the Right Rev. ALFRED LEE, D.D., Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in Delaware, U.S.
3. *The Mexican Branch of the Church, described by Eye-witnesses.* New York: Published by "The League in Aid of the Mexican Branch of the Church."

MOST of our readers, probably, have heard of the "Church of Jesus" in Mexico, and of the movement to which the founding of that Church is due. The movement is deeply interesting, and is likely, we believe, to lead to great results. Its initial stages, we have been informed, were connected with tracts bearing the honored name of J. C. Ryle.¹ We are, therefore, the more inclined to regard it, in its all-important doctrinal aspects, as a thoroughly sound movement. It certainly has especial claims upon the readers of THE CHURCHMAN. It is Episcopal, Liturgical, and appeals, as does the Reformed Church of England, to the Word of God. A distinguished supporter of Missions writes to us: "I believe it to be a *doctrinal* movement; utterly unlike the Old Catholic affair. . . . The most curious point is that the movement is attacked both in front and in rear; on one side by certain High Churchmen as 'Protestant,' 'Fanatical,' and 'Low,' on the other side by Plymouthites, and, I am sorry to say, by certain Presbyterians and Methodists, as 'High,' 'Ritualistic,' &c. The truth is, however, it is doctrinally sound. . . . In reality, I regard it as the most healthy and satisfactory movement we have had since the Reformation. . . . Not the least interesting point is that they are framing their Liturgy on the lines of the old Mozarabic—ancient Spanish—Liturgy. This is wise, and will conciliate Spaniards." Time will show, we believe, that our correspondent is not unduly hopeful.

At present we are unable to do more than give a brief sketch of the history of "the Church of Jesus," with a few extracts from American documents. At the beginning of the

¹ From private advices we learn that Bishop Riley has translated several of Mr. Ryle's tracts into Spanish. The tract which the converted friar Aguas calls "True Liberty" was Mr. Ryle's "Are you Free?"

present year there were six ordained Presbyters, several candidates for the ministry and a lay reader to each congregation. There were about 3500 regular members, and about as many more casual members. There were three churches in the capital; the church and chapel of St. Francis, the church of St. Joseph, and one in the ex-convent of St. Anthony. Several congregations have built a house of prayer, according to the scanty means they possess.

From a statement prepared by the Rev. H. Dyer, D.D., of the diocese of New York, soon after his return from Mexico, we quote the following:—

In 1865 there commenced in the city of Mexico a religious movement, having reference to the establishment of an independent Mexican Church. This movement was manifestly inspired by the Holy Ghost and the Word of God. For a time it was under the supervision of a former Roman Catholic Presbyter, by the name of Aguilar, and of a layman by the name of Hernandez. The Bible was freely circulated. The Rev. Dr. Riley, then in this country,¹ heard of this work, and had many pamphlets published in the Spanish language, and sent them to Mexico for distribution. The Liberal Government, then under the presidency of Benito Juarez, a pure Indian of the Aztec race, sympathised with this movement, and rendered it such support and protection as it could. In 1868 it had made such progress as to justify the sending of a delegate to the United States to make known to the Christians here its character and its promise. On reaching our city this delegate petitioned Dr. Riley to go himself to Mexico. Accordingly, towards the end of 1868, he left New York, and soon after was actively employed in his new field of labour. By reason of his birth and early training in a Spanish-speaking country, he had great facilities in the prosecution of his work. He was most cordially received by the lovers of a pure Gospel, and rendered very effective service. He continued his labours for a year and a quarter, during which time the movement was organised under the name of the Church of Jesus in Mexico. After this Dr. Riley spent some time in the States, making known and advocating the claims of this enterprise. In 1871 he returned to Mexico, and was soon joined by Manuel Aguas, a very distinguished Presbyter of the Roman Church. They secured and opened the large church of St. Joseph, and the chapel of the famous church of San Francisco. Under the united labours of these two earnest men the interest rapidly increased, and extended throughout the city and into the country.

Concerning the Presbyter Aguilar mentioned in the previous ex-

¹ Mr. Riley, a Presbyter of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, of American parentage, but of Chilian birth and education, was then ministering in the Spanish tongue to an Episcopal congregation in the city of New York. In view of the admirable fitness of the Rev. Henry C. Riley for the work in Mexico, it is no presumption to recognise the hand of God in this call.

tract, Bishop Lee gives interesting information. "When the attempt was made to seat the unfortunate Maximilian upon the throne of Mexico," writes the Bishop, "advantage was taken of the new condition of things to introduce a considerable supply of copies of the Bible in the Spanish tongue. This was especially done by the British and Foreign Bible Society. Some of the precious seed fell upon ground prepared by Divine grace for its reception. Among those thus enlightened was a priest named Francisco Aguilar."

Upon him the reading of the volume produced like effects as upon Luther in the convent of Erfurth. He not only rejoiced in the discovery which was so precious to his own soul, but he longed to extend to others the blessings he had found. By him the first Protestant congregation, for the worship of God in the Spanish tongue and the preaching of the Gospel was gathered in the city of Mexico. The thought of Aguilar was to establish a Reformed Catholic Church, evangelical in doctrine and assimilated in model and polity to the primitive Apostolic pattern. He began with a little congregation of about fifty persons, which increased steadily under his assiduous labours. But his course was a brief one. His own exertions were exhausting, and persecution, none the less malignant if restrained from actual violence, was exceedingly harassing. Within two years he succumbed, pressing, in his last moments, the Bible to his heart. Among his papers was found the translation of a little volume, in which the right and duty of every man to search the Scriptures was powerfully argued. This was published by the Rev. H. C. Riley, and proved an effective ally to his work.

Mr. Riley arrived in Mexico in 1869. He re-collected, as far as practicable, the scattered flock of Aguilar, teaching both publicly and from house to house. The Romish party, unable to crush him by violence, determined to employ argument. For this purpose they selected one of the most eminent and learned ecclesiastics of the capital, Manuel Aguas, a Dominican friar, and very popular as a preacher. He examined Mr. Riley's publications with the intention of preparing a refutation. But the Lord led him by a way that he knew not. He was himself vanquished by the power of the truth. "There fell from his eyes as it had been scales." He discovered that he had been all his life in darkness, and that the work he had undertaken to oppose was of the Lord. He sought personal conference with Mr. Riley, and after painful conflict and deep searchings of heart, he joined himself to that which he had been wont to look upon as an odious and heretical sect. A more striking conversion we hardly remember.

On the character and career of Aguas we cannot now dwell. In 1872 he rested from his labours. A most interesting letter was published in October, 1871, by Manuel Aguas, Bishop-elect

of "the Church of Jesus," and we quote a few sentences in which he refers to his conversion :—

I was in this sad state when there reached me the pamphlet called "True Liberty." I read it most carefully; and, notwithstanding that I tried to find, in the arsenal of my Romish subtleties, arguments with which to answer the clear reasoning that I found in this publication, a voice within—the voice of my conscience—told me that my answers were not satisfactory, and that perhaps I was in error. . . . I commenced to study the Bible, without paying any attention to the Romish notes and interpretations. This study, from the moment that it was accompanied by earnest prayer, led me to true happiness. I commenced to see the light. The Lord had pity on me, and enabled me to clearly understand the great truths of the Gospel.

We may add, in closing this preliminary Paper, that on June 24th, 1879, the Rev. H. C. Riley, D.D., was consecrated Bishop of the Mexican Reformed Church, in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, by six Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. According to the Boston correspondent of the *Guardian*,¹ the Bishop of Maryland, the seventh of the Bishops who had conducted the negotiations with the young sister Church, was prevented by his infirmities from taking part in the consecration. The form of consecration was, for the most part, that of the American Ordinal; but the solemn promise of conformity was necessarily different, and was in the following words :—

In the name of God, Amen.

I, Henry Chauncey Riley, chosen Bishop of the Mexican Branch of the Catholic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Valley of Mexico, in the Republic of Mexico, do hereby promise conformity and obedience to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the said Mexican Branch of the Catholic Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the same are set forth in the covenant entered into between the Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America and the said Mexican Church, ratified by the said Bishops in Council on the 29th day of October, in the year of our Lord, 1875, and by the Synodical authorities of the said Mexican Church on the 5th day of January, in the year of our Lord, 1876.

So help me God, through Jesus Christ.

The consecration of Dr. Holly to the Episcopate of a new and independent sister Church in Hayti, with the consecration of a Bishop for "the Church of Jesus" in Mexico, are signs of a change in the policy of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States.

¹ *Guardian*, July 23rd, 1879.