

## THE TRUTH ABOUT MUSSOLINI

## Well-known Protestant Missionary's Personal Experiences with the Dictator

Widely differing opinions have been expressed as to the character of Signor Mussolini, "Il Duce," the Dictator of Italy. No one can speak on the subject with greater authority, or from a larger fund of first-hand information, than Cavalier the Rev. H. H. Pullen, general director of the Spezia Mission for Italy. Mr. Pullen delivered himself thus at a recent meeting, as recorded in the monthly magazine, "The Protestant Woman."

I have come almost direct from the Italian Embassy, where I have been received as one of the most representative and best-known Protestants in Italy, with the utmost courtesy and consideration.

Times have changed in Italy. Most of you will know that things began to mend, and the light began to dawn, in Italy in 1870, when Garibaldi accomplished that great task of welding those broken, quarrelling little nations into one great modern Italy, bringing together the Republic of Venice and the Kingdom of Naples and the Duchy of Parma, and all the rest of them. He and his army marched against Rome, but were refused admittance at the Pious Gate, so they broke through the wall and the campaign brought the Pope to his knees, so to speak. They wrested from him the Papal States and the temporal power. The Papal States were

**Beautiful Central Provinces,**

rich in cities and towns, and a fertile soil—the treasure of the whole land. Garibaldi took these from the Vatican, also the City of Rome. Since that time the Popes have sulked. Pius IX, Leo XIII, and Pius X never left the Vatican from the time they were made Popes. If they needed medical care, they had to have it at the Vatican, and, when they died, they were buried there. They would have nothing to do with Italy. The Pope would receive no one officially who came from the King of Italy. Such visitors had to go back to the Embassy of their own country and get, officially, on to their own soil and from there they might go and see the Pope—the Pope would have no "truck" whatever with Italy.

Mussolini has changed all that. I may give you some ideas a little different from those which you have held as to what this man is, but I perhaps

**Know Him More Intimately**

than some other Englishmen, and anybody who knows me knows that I am a Protestant of the Protestants.

Pius IX, Leo XIII, and Pius X all declared the King of Italy a usurper, who had no right in the City of Rome, but Mussolini is determined that that state of things shall be changed.

The Protestants, after a great deal of prayer, were enabled to get into his hands a copy of the New Testament. It was a beautiful copy, delicately prepared and bound in green leather, the favourite colour of Italy; and he accepted it. A great diplomat going to see him a little later saw the book on his table. "Your Excellency, you do not read that book, do you?" he asked.

In measured terms came the reply: "That is the best book in the world, and I read it every day."

You will remember that Mussolini called the Pope to a conference, but the Pope did not come. He, however, sent a plenipotentiary who had full power to act. No doubt

there were frequent consultations between him and his master in the Vatican. The decision which was made at that conference is one of deep interest.

I will express my personal opinions about this, and I will give you facts. Mussolini has given the Pope the most tremendous defeat he has ever had since 1870. He has obtained from the Vatican and definitely restored to Italy the whole of the Papal States, 138,000 square miles of the finest territory of Italy. He has wrested from the Pope the City of Rome. He has obtained his signature to a renunciation of any claim for ever, on the part of either the Pope or the Vatican, to all that district and that splendid city. He has insisted that the first article of the Statuto, the Magna Charta of Italy, shall be changed to favour more fully the Protestants. When Garibaldi did his wonderful work, a new Magna Charta of Italy came in under which we have lived in Italy, and which gave to us

**A Larger Measure of Liberty**

than we possessed before. You who knew Italy then, knew that the Government of the Popes in the Papal States was an evil one. Dirt and immorality were rife. It was possible for a man to be imprisoned for possessing a New Testament or for carrying on family worship. That is all changed now. The first article of the Statuto of 1870 reads thus: "The Roman Catholic religion is the religion of the Italian people; other religions may be tolerated." Mussolini read his New Testament, and he found, too, that we Protestants were loyal people and people to be trusted, and he has changed that first article to read as follows: "The Roman Catholic religion is the religion of the Italian people; other religions shall be recognised." He has told the Pope quite plainly that now he has no jurisdiction in Italy, except in the City of the Vatican, where he reigns over about a square mile. He has given up 138,000 square miles and the great City of Rome, and has instead about a square mile. There

**He Reigns as King,**

but not beyond that region. The surrender of the Pope was signed on February 11th, 1929, and on March 11th Mussolini made a magnificent discourse on the new liberty. He has let it be known that every single Roman Catholic priest or bishop in Italy must swear loyalty to the King first. Moreover, he made it clear that we Protestant Christians now have the right of performing the marriage ceremony in our own buildings. If any of our young friends wanted to get married, we could not marry them before. If they did not wish the priests to marry them, they had to go to the municipality, and, after a tremendous amount of red tape and humiliating procedure, they could go through a mere secular ceremony there and then come back to us for a blessing on the marriage. "It will not do," said Mussolini, and he has given to us the right to authorise our own pastors and ministers to perform the marriage ceremony.

**In Our Own Buildings.**

It is a matter of great interest to me that when Mussolini was ill a little while ago, a girl in the Spezia Mission Orphanage, entirely trained by us, nursed him. Her mother died in a lunatic asylum, and her father died from delirium tremens. When this little girl came to us, she was a poor little thing, but

we nursed her and cared for her. Then when she grew up, a wicked aunt, who was associated with an authorised house of ill fame in Italy, tried to get hold of her, but we got the right to keep her, and we trained her well and efficiently. She is today a cultured lady, a true Protestant Christian, and would give her testimony for her Lord and Master anywhere.

Mussolini and those under him have been most gracious and considerate to our work and to me personally. He has shown complete confidence in us. He has given to us and to

**All Our Protestant Brethren**

a new liberty. We have never referred any case of injustice or unfairness to him without receiving the most fair and impartial study of the situation, and for myself I have profound respect for, and confidence in, the present Dictator of Italy. Mussolini has always been courteous and loyal to the King of Italy. Everybody loves the King of Italy, but, however bright a star may be, if the glorious morning sun rises over the mountains the star becomes somewhat obscured. So whenever the King and Mussolini went to State functions together, all honour was shown to the King, but for Mussolini there was a roar of cheers and tremendous enthusiasm. Now they generally attend separate State functions, and this arrangement works beautifully.

As for Mussolini himself, his personal life is upright and honourable. Some people have

**Compared Him with Napoleon Bonaparte.**

Napoleon brought his family and his friends to the capital and surrounded them with gorgeous and expensive luxuries. Mussolini has done nothing of the kind. His wife lives quite modestly, and the children have not in any way been accustomed to pomp and luxury. Mussolini has the money bags of the country in his own hands today, but realizes the tremendous responsibility for the wise and honest spending of the nation's money.

Mussolini believes, rightly, that one cannot deal with a fever-stricken patient in the same way as one would with a perfectly healthy person. Italy is, so to speak, a fever-stricken patient at the present time, needing special treatment. The present system is not a permanent one. Mussolini himself said: "You do not want a second Mussolini." He has expressed his warm admiration of the British constitution. You must have patience with him whilst he is breaking down the Papal power and opening up new liberty for his people. He is giving liberty of worship and abundant opportunity for the spread of the truth as it is in Jesus.

The Spezia Mission for Italy commenced as quite a small undertaking in the then little city of Spezia in 1866, inhabited by only about 7,000 people. My beloved predecessor, the Rev. Edward Clarke, with his brave sister, gathered the children together and taught them the old, old story of Jesus and His love. If they got twelve children in the first days, they were pleased, and, if twenty they thought it most encouraging. They were people of earnest prayer and of faith, and they builded better than they knew.—The Christian Herald.

The blood test of our religion is our attitude toward our enemies.