

Provence.

THE author of the exquisite translation of Mistral's "Miréio," and the writer of those delightful essays on Provençal poetry, is "at home" in describing "A Provençal Pilgrimage" in this and in the July number of THE CENTURY. If Miss Preston's paper and Mr. Pennell's pictures send to that enchanted and unhackneyed part of Europe a procession of Passionate Pilgrims, not a little happiness will be added to the sum of human joys.

The Rhône of to-day must be something like the Rhine of fifty years ago, though much less voyaged now than that was then. Miss Preston rushed into this Italy in France by rail. Another time she should find out whether the boat is running from Lyons, take it there in the early spring morning, and arrive in the magical evening at Avignon. The only permanent quantity of the company on the open-decked little steamer may be a couple of German tourists; its fluctuating components scarcely a dozen peasants and one much-attended cow. But what a panorama of medieval quaintness, grandeur, and unimagined beauty; what

lonely castles overlooking from unknown heights what pictured towns of what unfamiliar names; what glorious river sweeps; what rushing waters; what chattering and adventurous landings!

From Lyons to Avignon — a day's journey from the new world to the old; a transition all the stranger because it is the same country, and still not the same. Here are not only the Middle Ages of France but of Italy, with ancient Rome outspread as a background. Here too are the new troubadours. Aubanel, alas, is gone now; but here still are Roumanille, Mistral, Matthieu, Gras, the adopted *filibre* Bonaparte-Wyse, Madame Roumanille, and Mademoiselle. Is there any other modern community where not to be a poet needs apology? where the poet is not hiding his calling half the time, as the girl who enlists in the army needs must hide her maiden breasts?

We spoke above of a "procession," but it was only of Passionate Pilgrims. The fashionable tourist has no call to Provence; and if he really lingered there he would, thank Heaven! find himself both uncomfortable and bored. It will be many a long day before Provence is spoiled.

OPEN LETTERS.

The Siberian Exile Petition Movement of Philadelphia.

THOSE who have read THE CENTURY MAGAZINE articles, by Mr. George Kennan, on the Siberian Exile System of Russia, will be gratified to know of the work of the Association formed in Philadelphia for the purpose of distributing as widely as possible a carefully prepared petition to the Czar, in which his attention is called to the intense interest the citizens of the United States are taking in the system of punishment in vogue in Russia, and pointing out, in a frank but courteous manner, the lack of harmony in that system with civilization's advanced ideas of humanity.

The Philadelphia Association was formed late last year after hearing one of Mr. Kennan's lectures in Association Hall. At the close of the lecture the Rev. William Neilson McVickar, D. D., arose, and asked with deep feeling: "Cannot something be done for the relief of these people? Cannot the conditions of these political prisoners and convicts sent to Siberia be ameliorated? Shall we not do something?" The questions were like the powerful precipitant in the chemist's laboratory. All the elements of deep feeling throughout the country were in solution, and this one drop of warm heart blood precipitated the elements into forces of action. An association of influential people was formed, with Dr. McVickar as president.

The question of reform and relief was discussed in all its aspects. The cruelties and injustices practiced were, of course, the most prominent things before the minds and in the hearts of those interested when the Association was formed, and many felt in the face of these like doing something exceedingly radical — protesting, denouncing, and even threatening the Russian government. But this, while quite satisfactory as an expression of feeling, did not seem likely to produce any great results as a method of reform. It was sometimes felt in the course of the discussion that the remedy lay in urging

certain radical changes upon the government, but this was completely outside any efforts an association of citizens in the United States might justly make, although the power of public opinion in the United States might indeed aid in bringing about such a change. State interference was even suggested, but this was dismissed at once as leading to state complications.

The Association had to contend with people of various minds and opinions — the radicals and the conservatives; and it felt deeply the necessity in this great work for humanity of unifying sentiment in the United States so as to add force to the protest. After much discussion with wise and conservative men — diplomatists, ex-ministers, and others well versed in Russian affairs — it seemed best for the first effort to send the Czar a petition couched in friendly and courteous terms, calling his attention to the points of interest and contact between the two countries, recognizing the traditional and almost sentimental friendship that has existed between the two countries, and so in a brotherly fashion, while recognizing our own defects, calling upon him to look into some of his methods of punishment, and, if possible, revise them. Such a petition, the Association felt, the Czar would be able to receive, and still retain his self-respect. If, however, he refused, he would lay himself open to the condemnation of the whole world.

The Association believed that such a course was more likely to produce beneficial results. A petition so framed has certainly a better chance of consideration, and most men feel justified in going thus far and in doing this much, even though there are crying evils in our own Government and State institutions and in our methods of dealing with the penal classes. They believe that we are doing well in our efforts in these matters in our own country; and they believe that we shall do still better if we remember the chained hands

held out to us from far Siberia. In any event we cannot, as a Christian nation, pass by on the other side and allow our brother to suffer without bearing our testimony. The question of interference is of minor consideration as compared with the evil.

The spirit of humanity in this our day has grown so strong and spread so widely that it is awake to all imperfections in every part of the body of humanity, and by each new success at reform, in whatever part of the body, learns wisdom and takes courage for other efforts in other places. The power of a great moral movement of this kind is something that is not quickly realized by busy, energetic, practical people. Such people do not see at once that the force of such a movement as this is quite as much in the constant registering of the disapproval of the great American people as in the presentation of a piece of paper with a certain form of words upon it at the end of the work. This is the constant dropping which must wear away the indifference and inhumanity of the Czar and the bureaucracy by which he is surrounded. For the progress of the movement, there can be little doubt, is being constantly reported to the Russian government through its representatives and the European press; and that fact is of infinitely greater importance than the presentation of any form of petition in the future. Public opinion moved in this country is being freely noted by the European press, and is giving hope and courage to the oppressed, while at the same time it forces the question of reform upon the minds and hearts of those who have the power of reform in their hands. From various reliable sources we know that the movement has the sympathy of the highest Russian officials, as one of them lately wrote, "This movement in Philadelphia will do more to bind the hearts of the Russian and the American people together than a whole century of diplomacy."

The petition movement, then, appeals above all to the supreme court the decisions of which are expressed by the united public opinion of the world. And to this court every sufferer may appeal, and its verdict, no potentate, at least in this our century, can afford to despise. The harvest of sympathy and interest is likely to be a splendid expression of public opinion.

Over thirty thousand petition sheets have been sent out up to this time, and they are now being mailed at the rate of from five hundred to a thousand per day, while from twelve to eighteen hundred signatures are being returned in the same space of time.

The Central Bureau in Philadelphia urges the formation of local committees or auxiliary associations in all towns and cities, so that the distribution of the petition may proceed in a systematic manner among the societies, clubs, churches, etc., of the community, and so that matters of advertisement may be decided upon, and contributions received for the printing, posting, and clerical work of the Central Bureau in Philadelphia.¹

In urging this movement the Association feels that the reactive influence of such a great expression of public opinion on a question of humanity upon the minds and hearts of our own people is not the least of

the good results likely to follow. It asks the cordial cooperation and sympathy of every citizen of the United States.

Alfred J. P. McClure.

THE PETITION.

TO HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, THE CZAR OF ALL THE RUSSIAS :

We who petition your Majesty are citizens of the United States of America.

We belong to a people who have long been bound by the natural ties of sympathy and gratitude to the great Russian nation, and to the Czars clothed with her majesty, who wield her power and shape her destiny.

It is your Majesty's province to do for Russia what we, in a certain sense, do for ourselves; and though the methods of governmental action are different, the aims of good government are the same: the strength and true grandeur of the state and the welfare and happiness of the people.

For these things nations are organized, and laws are decreed and executed; for these things great princes in the fear of God exercise imperial sway, and presidents are appointed.

Differ though they may in outward form, your government and our government are brothers in their noblest duties.

Nor are our fraternal professions an empty feeling: we remember, and we can never forget, how the Czar, by his faith in the stability of the American Union and by the presence of Russian ships in the harbor of New York, strengthened the Republic when it was supposed, by less far-sighted sovereigns and statesmen, to be on the verge of ruin. Our danger, then, arose from an evil which your illustrious father, Alexander II., by his example, helped our illustrious president, Abraham Lincoln, to remove; and the great prince who liberated the Russian serfs and the great citizen who freed the American slaves, by kindred deeds of humanity, linked their countries together by enduring ties.

Sharing, therefore, as the past has taught us to do, in the thoughts that concern the glory and happiness of your people, we have been moved to bring to you, with good greetings, this petition:

That your Majesty will personally take note of a widespread interest, among us, in the workings and effects of the Siberian exile system.

We do not forget the penal reforms already accomplished in the Russian Empire. We are not blind to the mental and physical sufferings that of necessity are a part of any system of punishment for crime against individuals, society, or the state; nor are we unmindful of the need of reforms which are actively engaging the attention of philanthropists in our own methods of dealing with convicts. In this we are giving expression to the feeling of a friendly people, that in the punishment of some of her subjects Russia, whether from causes peculiar to her people, or on account of ancient custom, is not in harmony with the humanizing sentiments of the age. It is our wish that, by the wisdom and power of the Czar and the favor of God, Russia may grow in the admiration and sympathy of the American people and of the whole civilized world.

Forests and Streams.

IN the April CENTURY there is an article by Major Powell entitled "The Non-Irrigable Lands of the Arid Region." The article is largely devoted to the forests of the arid regions of the West. As far as accepted scientific forestry is concerned Major Powell's positions are revolutionary. His only attempt to sustain with any data or proof views at variance with those now received is an indefinite citation of certain alleged investigations in the Wasatch Range and elsewhere.

To set up such a bald and vague statement against the experience and writings of every prominent forestry man of whom we have knowledge is certainly extraordinary.

¹ The Central Bureau of the Association is at 1407 Locust street, Philadelphia, and the officers in charge are: Rev. W. N. McVickar, D. D., President; Mr. J. P. Mumford, Treasurer; Rev. Alfred J. P. McClure, Corresponding Secretary; Mrs. W. F. Jenks, Recording Secretary.—EDITOR.