

# THE MISSIONARY SURVEY

SARAH LEE VINSON, Managing Editor.

Published monthly by the Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 5-8 North Sixth Street Richmond, Virginia. Single subscriptions, \$1.00 a year; in clubs of five or more 75 cents. Entered as second-class matter at Richmond, Virginia, under the Act of March 3, 1877.  
Acceptance of mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on July 5, 1918.

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## A NOBLE VICTORY FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN BRAZIL

J. PORTER SMITH, D. D.



Continent of South America.

**D**URING the spring of 1922 street preaching was begun in a modest way by a Christian in the city of Campinas, Brazil. It was not long before the populace was excited to petty persecution by representatives of the Romish Church. This went so far that violence was threatened and it was impossible to continue the meetings without the presence of armed police.

Despite the show of force readily granted by the civil authorities in order to preserve order and guarantee the constitutional right of street preaching, it was not long before it became evident that the Romish Church intended to call this right, vested in an article of the federal constitution, into question. Mobs gathered and threatened to overbear the police and to break up the meetings at all cost.

The gentleman who begun the preaching, at that time a member of

the Baptist Church, secured from the local judge a writ of habeas corpus to permit the carrying on this preaching in peace. All the Protestant Churches in the city were by this time offering full support to the movement. Opposition on the part of the Church of Rome became even more pronounced. Large meetings were organized by the Romish clergy and scheduled to meet at the same hour and on the same squares where our meetings were advertised to take place. It was reported on very good authority that the local bishop on Sunday morning, rose in his cathedral pulpit and called upon the faithful to follow him to further action to stamp out these meetings.

Bulletins were issued at the cathedral calling the faithful to be mindful of the fact that they were under strict prohibition not to attend the services of any type of heretics, whether in private or in public. This was done in such a way as to make it quite clear that this, the formal teaching of the Church of Rome, was not to be allowed to drop as a dead letter. The prohibition was clear-cut and final.

In the meantime, meetings continued. The local chief of police was taxed to the utmost to supply a sufficiently large body of police to maintain order during the services, to which throngs of orderly and interested listeners gathered at every point in the city where the open air services were held. One visiting any such gathering during those days would have seen a compact group of attentive hearers about a speaker standing on a doorstep or a chair in the center of the square, and preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thrown around this group there would be a cordon of police facing outward, restraining the mob, many of whom would have gladly broken through and attacked the group of worshippers. Here and there the lines would open and admit an individual who could



A Cuzco Church Door.

prove to the police that he wished to attend the service as a law-abiding listener.

The Roman Church authorities were not content to let the matter rest here. The local chief of police, a gentleman desirous of fulfilling his full duty, was called upon by individuals and committees, to change his policy and refuse protection to the open air meetings. This he steadfastly refused to do, until the demands on the police force seemed to him to be greater than his ability to comply with. The Church had not been inactive. She resolved to carry her case higher up, and appealed to the state supreme court to secure the withdrawal of the writ of habeas corpus granted by the local judge. It was not long before they triumphed in this.

Their local weekly was exultant, its articles against Protestantism more violent than ever. They seemed to breathe an air of triumph.

It was not possible to allow the case to stand thus. The Protestant forces of the city saw that it would be a serious mistake to allow the Romish Church thus publicly to express its hatred and to triumph over the article of the Constitution of Brazil, granting religious liberty. The more thoughtful men of the city in large numbers, whether Romanists or free thinking, expressed their views supporting the Constitution and deploring the attitude of the Romish hierarchy and clergy.

To secure the constitutional right, our case was carried before the Federal supreme court, and there argued ably

and conclusively by Rev. Bento Ferraz, a lawyer and minister of the Brazilian Independent Presbyterian Church. *Within eight days* a decision was rendered reversing that of the state supreme court, sustaining the writ of habeas corpus of the local judge, and clearly maintaining inviolate the constitutional right of street preaching.

It was rumored that the Roman Bishop made a trip to the city of Rio. If this trip had any bearing upon the case so close to his heart at that time, it was unavailing.

On our side there was much prayer; and He into whose hands it was entrusted gave us the victory. The cut herewith printed is a photograph of the first street meeting held after the decision of the supreme court was printed. The speaker for the occasion was Rev. Bento Ferraz himself, who made an able appeal for an open mind



A Caraja Indian sitting among the dry bones of his dead past—his only inheritance. Mr. Glass's explorations have proven that these Indians are quite accessible to religious influence. For generations they have been in contact with the white man but are still savage. Several tribes of these Brazilian Indians do not bury their dead.

and fair play. It was a stirring address, listened to in perfect order. Police were hardly to be seen. The constitutional right had been established and the people were glad of it.

## NEWS NOTES FROM LAVRAS

G. A. ROBERTS.

**I**NSTITUTO Evangelico opened its doors in Lavras in January, 1893.

It now consists of three main schools, namely: Collegio Carlota Kemper (preparatory and normal school), Gymnasio (high school and normal course), and Escola Agricola (agricultural college). It is interesting to note that in this country they use the term college to indicate an institution of elementary training, while the term school is used to denote higher learning.



Small Boys' Dormitory at the Instituto Evangelico, Lavras, Minas Brazil.

The total enrollment this year is 315. The Collegio Kemper has a record breaking attendance this year of 117, and is full to overflowing. This part of the Instituto has a most ideal location in the centre of town, but is sadly in need of a new building for both classrooms and dormitories. At the present rate of exchange a building could be put up for about one-half the number of dollars as when the rate is normal.

The Gymnasio is also suitably located in the lower part of town in a large campus. It also has a large attendance this year of 180 students. The dormitories of this department of the school are quite old and are in need of repairs and a new building.

Aside from our teaching, Mrs. Roberts and I have charge of the smaller boys' dormitory and the dining rooms of the whole Gymnasio.

You might be interested in our daily itinerary and what we have to eat.: 6:15, rising bell; 6:35, coffee and bread;