

The Christian Messenger.

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"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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Poetry.

DEW.

"O, dearest mother, tell me, pray,
Why are the dew drops gone so soon;
Could they not stay till close of day,
To twinkle on the flowery spray?"

"My child, 'tis said such beautiful things,
Too often loved with vain excess,
Are swept away by angel-wings,
Before contamination clings
To their pure loveliness.

"Behold yon rainbow brightening yet,
To which all mingled hues are given;
There are thy dew-drops, grandly set
In a resplendent coronet
Upon the brow of Heaven.

"No earthly stain can reach them there;
Woven with sunbeams there they shiae,
A transient vision of the air,
But yet a symbol pure and fair,
Of love and peace divine."

The child looked upward into space,
With eager and inquiring eyes,
And o'er its sweet and thoughtful face
Came a faint glory, and a grace
Transmitted from the skies.

With the last odorous sigh of May,
That child beneath the flowers was laid;
Like dew, its spirit passed away,
To mingle in eternal day,
With angels perfect made.

—Household Words.

France, and the Bible.

[Our readers will be pleased to resume the continuation of these original papers on France. We have been reluctantly compelled to defer them for some weeks past.—Ed.]

For the Christian Messenger.

Protestantism in France.

ITS RISE AND DECLINE.

THE history of Protestantism in France is melancholy, but instructive. At one time we see it on the point of obtaining a complete and glorious victory; then after a time we see it almost eradicated from the land, indebted apparently to contempt for mere existence. We learn in tracing this history that the church of Rome is faithless, only faithless, and that continually; that while professing peace she can counsel treachery, and that in professing enmity her hatred is lasting, savage and remorseless. We also learn that religion needs not the crooked policy of statesmen, nor the horrid arms of the warrior; that its principles of love to God and love to men are its best weapons of assault or defence. While the Roman Catholics were perjured, intolerant, imprisoned, the Protestants were not free from gross errors. The doctrines of the Reformation were not unheard in France. They rang through the land with marvellous rapidity, calling on men to view the corruptions of Apostate Rome, and inviting them to a fountain of pure and living waters.

In every section of the country the influence of Protestantism was seen and felt. Men turned away from the church which hitherto they had loved, and felt an intense yearning for liberty and faith. The nobility and gentry by thousands embraced the doctrines of the Reformation.

In the meantime this remarkable progress was not unopposed. As the church could not excite affection, she sought to interpose a wall of fire between herself and her vigorous foe. But though fines and cruel imprisonments, and frightful tortures, and

dreadful deaths menaced Protestantism, still the good cause advanced. The martyr's confession seemed to prove the truth of his doctrine.

Then for a short time the emissaries of Rome breathed from their labours. The blood which they had spilt had only watered the good seed of truth. The Protestants growing in numbers, in intelligence and faith, were looking forward hopefully to the day when the tyranny and superstition which they hated should have passed away forever. The Catholics reluctantly and for a short time accorded that toleration which they were no longer able to withhold.

But the fears of the Papists and the hopes of the Protestants were not destined to be realized. After a fierce and sanguinary struggle the religion of the Reformers was almost banished from France. A struggle which lasted for over a hundred years was terminated by the edict of Nantes in 1598, which gave the Protestants equal civil rights with their Catholic fellow-countrymen. But the good cause declined gradually until its enemies were bold and strong enough to renew the struggle. In 1685 the edict of Nantes was revoked, then after frightful sufferings the Protestants became weak and insignificant. For nearly one hundred years they suffered under the injustice and contempt of their rulers, until, by the revolution, they once more received their civil rights.

CAUSES OF ITS DECLINE.

The causes of the decline of Protestantism in France may be easily traced.

The church of Rome had undergone a considerable change through the influence of the Reformation. The Reformers had been able to point out frightful immoralities, foul corruptions in the holy, catholic, and apostolic church. She felt that these must be covered over. To meet the Reformers, the church of Rome sought to use their own weapons, and to oppose to genuine sanctity, something that to the eyes of men might closely resemble it. In opposing the Reformation, she was herself obliged to submit to a reformation.

This change was most distinctly seen in France. The Priests became decent in their lives. Church benefices were no longer conferred on women and children. Colleges were founded, whence proceeded some of the most eloquent preachers that have ever lived. New orders of Monks and Nuns arose. New institutions were founded, whose members by their enthusiasm and austerities, regained for their faith the favor of the common people. By these means also a new life was infused into every part of the church in France. An ignorant indolent, avaricious and sensual priesthood, now became active, intelligent and austere.

On the other hand there were weaknesses in the surviving strength of French Protestantism. We remarked before, that the nobility and gentry to a very great extent favored the doctrines of the Reformation. Many of them did so from impure motives. They sought religion as a means of deliverance from tyranny, or as an instrument for the furtherance of selfish and ambitious ends. So long as there was a prospect that Protestantism would triumph, these great names in the eyes of the world were an ornament and a support. But they to a considerable extent transformed a pure and active church into a political party, and thus of course by extending its aims weakened its power. Then, when prospects of triumph were becoming fainter and fainter, these noble defenders of the Protestant faith were the first to be re-converted to the church of Rome. They found arguments to be irresistible when they were strengthened by the fear of punishment or the hope of reward.

Then again, the Huguenots, mainly through the influence of their princes and nobles, sought to defend their faith by arms. The sufferings which the lovers of reform had endured were frightful; still their appeal to arms was an error. The horrors of war were not adapted to increase that spirituality and heavenly love, which are the supports of religion.

There had been a power in the sufferings of the French Protestants. Their cause was safe so long as they were willing meekly and unresistingly to suffer and to die. No preacher is so eloquent, no warrior so mighty as the martyrs, there is a resistless eloquence in his sufferings, his death leads captive the sympathies of men. Not even a slaughter so atrocious as that of St. Bartholemew's day could have injured materially the Protestant cause. The treacherous and remorseless murder of so many thousands of men, women and children, would have caused men's hearts to turn shudderingly away from the church which could sanction such fiendish atrocities. But when the Huguenots drew the sword the secret of their wonderful power was lost. Religion did not ask for the desecration of cathedrals, the sacking of cities, or the horrors of the blood-stained field. Those who wavered now remained true to their allegiance to Rome, while her faithful adherents hated more intensely those whom they now regarded as the enemies of God and of the king.

The Protestants fought like heroes, but no heroism could bring them back to their former position. They won toleration, but toleration did not give them their former powers. They were deserted and betrayed by many whom they had regarded as their mightiest defenders. When sufficiently weak they were again persecuted, and finally almost extirpated.

These facts are instructive. When the doctrines of the cross, unaided by the worldly and the mighty, came to men's hearts, when a love for souls inspired the friends of the Reformation, when the faithful proclaimed their doctrines by holy lives and by unresisting deaths, then the truth rapidly advanced. But when priestly names were trusted in, when the professed followers of Christ had not an eye single to His glory, when the gospel was defended in the battlefield, then Popery triumphed.

The American and Foreign Bible Society

Commenced the celebration of its Nineteenth Anniversary on Wednesday the 7th inst. in the Oliver-st. Baptist Church, N. York, the Rev. Dr. D. T. Welsh presiding. The meeting was commenced by appropriate religious exercises. The Rev. Dr. Welsh returned thanks for the position conferred upon him, and made appropriate remarks upon the greatness of the work in which they were engaged. The Committee reported the names of the Rev. T. D. Welsh for President; Horace T. Love for Corresponding Secretary, and the Rev. Dr. Lathrop and others Vice-Presidents, which were adopted unanimously.

The Treasurer's report was then read, and the meeting was briefly addressed by the Rev. T. D. Foster, of Vermont.

In the afternoon the Nineteenth Annual Report was read by the Rev. H. T. Love. The Report commenced by noticing that the Rev. Spencer H. Cone, D. D., for 14 consecutive years the President of the Society, and 30 life-members had departed this life since the last Anniversary.

The whole amount received into the treasury during the past year was \$105,617 10, of which \$35,211 60 were funds undirected by the donors, and \$70,405 50 were re-

stricted to particular purposes, of which \$62,587 belongs to the Bible House fund, \$3,926 for the sacred Scriptures, \$3,330 30 for colporteurs.

The whole amount paid out of the treasury was \$107,409. The receipts, though in advance of previous years, were not enough to carry forward the work with great efficiency. To remedy this want and provide for monthly payments to the colporteurs, the Board have made a beginning of a plan of contributions to the Society by "quarterly subscriptions."

The amount of money appropriated for Bible work in foreign fields was \$18,845, expended for Bibles in foreign languages and the payment of colporteurs' salaries. The demand for the Word of God in Central Europe was never so urgent, though the spirit of persecution has broken out afresh in Schleswig, Denmark. The whole amount expended in Germany during the past year was \$15,712.

There are some five or six thousand humble-minded Christians in different parts of Germany, the greater part of whom have been brought to the knowledge of the truth through the instrumentality of Bible colportage.

Of the converts in New-Mexico—that dark land where not more than one person in fifty knows how to read—they were credibly informed that nearly every individual dates his first convictions of sin and recovery to the truth, to the instrumentality of their Bible colportage. The consideration of the Society was pressed to their vast responsibility in this matter. To convert the heathen, the best means was to read to him the pure Word of God and give him the meaning thereof.

The whole number of colporteurs employed at any time during the year was 69—18 Germans, 18 Americans, 8 Irish, and 4 each of Prussians, Danes, and Mexicans.

During a period of time equal to about 132 months 60,960 visits have been made for Bible reading and other exercises; 6,071 families were found destitute of the Word of God; 1,624 children and others brought into the Baptist Sabbath schools; 2,807 persons induced to attend Baptist meetings; 1,491 to prayer-meetings; 1,066 sermons preached; 4,419 visits to vessels and for sailors made; 320 persons have been converted; and 356 have been baptized. In general, the colporteurs circulate the Word of God by reading it from house to house at stated intervals, leaving it only with such as have given evidence that they want it to read, limiting their labors each to about 400 families. By this means it is no bar to the circulation of the Word that some are unable to read.

The whole number of Bibles distributed during the year considerably exceeded 100,000.

During the year there have been created, by the payment of \$30 each, 34 Life Members of the Society, and by the payment of \$150 each, 16 Life Directors—the whole number of the former now are 5,294; of the latter, 405.

The Rev. Wm. Reese moved the adoption of the resolutions, and spoke of the adaptation and success of the plans adopted by the Society for evangelization.

The meeting adjourned with a benediction by the Rev. Dr. Hague.

The annual sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. Hague of Albany, from the last four verses of the 14th chapter of Acts. He considered the origin of the first missionary church; the authority by which that church first began the work of the evangelization of the heathen; and from this he drew lessons adapted to the occasion.