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"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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WHOLE SERIES
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Poetry.

Lines for the Lowly.

BY THE REV. F. TUCKER.

A tear drop of the morning
Hung on a blade of grass,
A simple bead of water,
—A thousand you might pass;
But when the slanting sunlight
Streamed down in morning pride,
Then you might see my water-drop
Transfigured, glorified.

I looked—it shone a diamond,
Bright, sparkling, clear, and keen;
I looked again—an emerald
Hung pure in living green:
Again—it beamed out golden,
A topaz to the view;
Then flamed a ruby, fiery red;
Then sapphire, summer blue.

I saw thus how a water-drop
Is kin to all things fair;
Can give as bright and beauteous hues
As arching rainbows wear:
Can shine with light so radiant,
And show as varied gem,
As the holy city fresh from glory,
The new Jerusalem.

And I thought how many an action
Of simplest, lowliest guise
May yet, beneath the beam of heaven,
Shine lovely to all eyes:
May show such beauteous motive
As angels shall applaud,
Truth, honour, virtue, goodness,
The love of man and God.

Two mites, that make a farthing,
Insured the widow's fame;
A single cup of water
Can buy a deathless name:
The humblest work for Jesus,
The gentle word or look,
The soothing sigh, the cheering smile,
Stands written in His book.

Fear not, then, lowly christian,
Though deep in shade thou dwell;
Thy Lord will mark thy faithfulness,
He will requite thee well:
The dew that waits the dawning
Shall glitter in the ray,
And bright shall shine thy jewell'd crown
When Christ shall bring the day!

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

Protestantism in France.

[No. 2.]

REVIVAL OF PROTESTANTISM.

The Protestants of France had maintained a desperate conflict, they had "fought like brave men long and well," and when victory departed from them, they had suffered like martyrs. They for the present had lost their cause. Their pastors and teachers finished their course in foreign lands: Liberty and hope were lost together. Then we notice a state of things more melancholy than the slaughter of St. Bartholemew's day, or the dragonades of Louis XIV.

The Protestant churches lost their spirituality. The power that once stimulated them to daring in action, and to endurance in suffering, now departed. Godliness was lost, and finally even the form of it almost disappeared.

First we observe a lack of piety—then heresy appears. When the power of the Spirit is no longer felt in the heart—the most precious truths of revelation become distasteful. When all those sublime but mysterious facts which circle around the cross—and which make the religion of Christ superior to the religion of nature—

are openly derided or actually disbelieved, the next step is to deny the inspiration of the scriptures. These gradations were witnessed in many of the churches,—some of them in all, at first partly declined, then all idea of discipline was lost—and finally the peculiar doctrines of christianity were surrendered. The churches which had escaped the smart and flame of Rome, now fell victims to the insidious, deadly poison of infidelity.

Such was the state of Protestantism in France for many tedious years. There was neither light nor hope in the successors of those heroes who had once shaken Catholicism to the centre, and had given hope of victory to truth. Since the first revolution, they have enjoyed a measure of liberty, and many of the churches also, received pay from the State—but with an increase of liberty there did not appear an increase of piety. Until lately the churches slumbered heavily, and profoundly under the influence of the poison with which they had drugged themselves. Of late years however, there has been an awakening—a revival of pure and undefiled religion has taken place in France. The Protestant churches have to some extent thrown off the baneful influence which for so many years had unchristianized them. If we would trace this progress we must notice when the emissaries of Rome are most busily engaged, and when the holy mother is most enraged.

In the reign of Louis Philippe Protestants are again deemed worthy of notice. It was seen that France enjoyed civil and religious liberty. Her ruler was chosen by the nation and called the citizen king. The constitution of the realm acknowledged the principles of toleration. Yet under such a king and constitution, men who were innocent of every crime were fined and imprisoned. Places of worship were closed, and faithful pastors were silenced. Wherever religion was, there the police were gathered together. Louis was more faithful to the church of Rome than that church was to him. By the revolution of 1848 more favorable prospects opened up before the churches. Those who entertained evangelical views eagerly embraced the opportunity thus afforded of doing good. The unsettled state of the country and the extravagant opinions which then were prevalent interposed serious obstacles to the spread of truth. Still the great cause advanced, colporteurs were employed, means of usefulness were devised and put in operation, and success attended the exertions put forth.

But another period of trial was at hand. In 1852, Louis Napoleon issued a decree authorizing the closing of all places of worship, except those belonging to churches under the control of the government. By the enforcing of this decree Christians were sorely tried. Some of the Protestant schools were closed, the colporteur was interrupted, and the spiritual worshipper once more exposed to fine and imprisonment.

Yet the churches found persecution to be a curse, not unmingled with blessing. Though the sanctuary was closed, and the preachers silenced—still the godly were not idle. They went from house to house preaching the gospel in an informal but effectual manner, and in this way brought the glad tidings to the ears of many who otherwise would have remained in ignorance.

At present there is in France a Protestant population exceeding two millions. Many of the churches are spiritually dead, but truth is rapidly working—and it must yet leaven the whole lump.

The day must come when France will cease to be infidel. She can never return

to the fold of Rome, and Protestantism offers all that she craves. Here are found the most powerful curbs to vile passions, and the largest liberty for pure affections, and true thoughts, and here is food and healthy stimulus for every faculty of the soul, above all here is furnished a knowledge of the way of peace. These blessings France craves and needs, and how she will yet take them—turning aside from the broken cisterns where she so long has lingered—she will drink from the pure fountain of living waters.

[One of the ablest and warmest friends of the Christian Messenger has sent us the following capital story. It was given in the C. M. about thirteen years ago. He says there are probably but few who will remember it, and a large majority of the present subscribers have not seen it, and therefore he with several other friends desires us to give it a place in our columns. Our readers generally will, we know thank him for doing so.—Ed.]

THE BLACK BULL.

OR A NEW VERSION OF AN OLD STORY, FOR ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.—IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

"Once on a time"—date and place wanting in the chronicle—but "once on a time" a certain church got into great difficulty and commotion, as churches sometimes unhappily do. Brotherly love gave place to alienation and coldness; and harmony, to commotion and mutual crimination. As might well be supposed, christian enjoyment was unknown. The spirit of prayer was silenced, and a spirit of unchristian bitterness, and animosity reigned. The power of the church to do good was completely paralysed, and the public means of grace lost all their proper efficacy. Their minister preached, and preached well,—but he might as well have talked in the midst of a tempest. When he inculcated the duties of christianity, and spoke of its benign influence and its subjects, some graceless unbeliever in the gallery would dart a glance down upon some of the members below, and then, with a malicious smile, look the good man right in the face as much as to say "dost try to impose these fictions on us. Yonder sit fifty staunch witnesses; all members of your church, who testify against the truth of every word you say." Thus the word of divine truth fell powerless at the feet of sinners, like arrows striking the iron rock. The church often met in "special meeting" to consider their difficulties. But O what contention, pride, self-will, animosity and all uncharitableness were there. In a word they came together for the worse and not for the better. Friendship became less known, and enmity became more deeply seated. So that it became a common remark among the surrounding population,—whose eyes and ears were wide open—"see how these christians hate one another!"

Things were rapidly approaching a crisis. Appearances portended the dissolution of the church as unavoidable and even desirable. And the pall of death seemed likely to rest on the murdered cause of Christ and heaven. Many loudly exulted. The sons of Belial in their drunken orgies and nightly revels indulged a fiend-like triumph over the bleeding body, pouring contempt and insult upon those who had troubled their heads by their piety and their prayers,—yet there were a few names even in this *Sardis* whose garments were undefiled—who wept and sighed over the desolations of their beloved Zion; and who stood daily between the porch and the altar, crying, Spare thy people O Lord; and give not thy heritage to reproach."

At the instance of these afflicted brethren,

the following course was adopted, as the last resort.

At no great distance lived an aged minister—a father in Israel, whose praise was in all the churches for his piety and prudence; for his wisdom and goodness. He had few equals for penetration to discover and skill to advise in whatever related to the affairs of the church of Christ. It was therefore concluded by the church to ask his counsel and assistance in their trials. A letter was accordingly prepared and sent, stating their difficulties and asking his advice. The good man was deeply pained on learning their state, and with all possible despatch, prepared a suitable answer to their request. The substance was as follows—"I sincerely lament, my brethren, the unchristian state into which you are fallen. How contrary is it to the letter and the spirit of that gospel, you profess to believe. How opposite to your own covenant obligations! How grievous to that Holy Spirit by which you are sealed! And how ruinous to the souls of men around you, many of whom know nothing of the gospel but what they learn from your walk and conversation. I therefore admonish you first of all, and beseech you, that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. But if ye bite and devour one another take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. It is as ye thus love another, that all men shall know that ye are the disciples of Christ." From this brief specimen, the reader can easily imagine how the letter went on and how it concluded. Pity we think the church never got it. But not to anticipate.

Now this good man owned a good farm at some distance from his residence; and it so happened that just as he had folded the above letter, and before he had directed it, word was brought that certain mischief was being done on his farm, and which required his advice. Whereupon he took up another sheet of paper and hastily wrote the following laconic order for his overseer, "Mend the fence, and keep the black bull out." This sheet he also folded up as the other, and then, by sheer mistake—directed it to—the church; and away it went—and the church's letter to the farm; whereat we might well suppose the overseer marvelled greatly. But before the mistake could be corrected the letter had gone past recall—which brings our story to,

PART II.

"Church met for business pursuant to adjournment."

The moderator took the chair, and the clerk his seat at the table, with the aforesaid letter in his hand, sealed and duly directed to the church. He commenced breaking the seal with a gravity becoming the occasion, and his office. A profound stillness reigned over the assembly such as had not been witnessed for months before. All waited with breathless expectation the counsel of age and the advice of experience and wisdom. The clerk opened the letter. The first thing which struck his prying vision was,—its brevity. But without salutation or note he proceeded—"Mend the fence, and—keep—the black bull out." He looked, but he was sure he had made no mistake. He turned over a leaf, but there was nothing there but a blank; and it was manifest he had reached the end of the