

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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WHOLE SERIES
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Poetry.

The New Year.

THE fresh young year—it cometh
With life, and joy, and song;
Light steps and happy faces
Its threshold gaily throng.

It cometh richly laden
With bright and lovely things;
Long days of summer sunshine,
And hours with golden wings.

Oh! say it giveth promise
Of life and joy alone;
That it hath no store of sorrow
No desolated home.

For alas! in sudden fancy
I have seen a shadow fall,
Whilst o'er the summer gladness
Death spread his funeral pall.

Yes, even so; it must be
That sorrow mingles here,
Even as rain and sunshine
Make up the fairest year.

But ah! thou hast not told
That there cometh from above,
To crown each earthly blessing,
Thought of His precious love—

His precious love, who guideth
Each moment as it flies,
Freights it with joy or sorrow,
Bright days or clouded skies.

Then still we give thee welcome,
Though thy future, none can tell;
For we know our Heavenly Father
Will order all things well.

History and Topography.

For the Christian Messenger.

Recollections of Rome.

[No. 6.]

PROTESTANTISM IN ROME.

A good Catholic in defining Protestantism will tell you that it is a mere negation, that consists only in a denial of the fundamental truths taught by the church, that in short it is no religion at all, but only another name for infidelity.

Assuming this definition of Protestantism to be correct, we are justified in the statement that Rome is the most Protestant city in Europe, Paris only excepted.

What religion the Romans believe in is certainly of a negative character. The men seldom go to any of the numerous churches which are scattered throughout the city, when the spectator will find a few women, muttering over their Ave Marias. The men attend confession, because obliged to do so by the laws, they attend grand ceremonies and festivals, as the Parisian attends the games, and illuminations of his fete days. Of course there are many exceptions to these remarks, but speaking generally, the faith of a Roman in Roman Catholicism is of a very feeble description.

We can readily turn to the causes which have made the Catholic religion so feeble, the very homes of the popes. The people cannot be kept in entire ignorance of their condition and its causes. The popes place every expression of liberal thought upon the Index Expurgatorius, but he cannot place those thoughts there, he can destroy written history, but there is an eloquent history stamped upon every monument in Rome. Who has brought upon Rome the spoilers from beyond the Alps? Who has kept Italy divided, deprived of her just, political importance, exposed to the ravages of every mighty robber? What has been the character of the shepherd of Christ's flock since he entered upon the patrimony of St. Peter? Who supports the glittering churches, and imposing ceremonies, and the thousands of priests and the pomp of papal states? Who are those who in their professed love for purity have denied the holy institution of marriage, and who, disregarding the laws of chastity, have rendered Rome a by-word in Catholic Europe? The Roman well knows.

In Italian literature there are books with which even popes dare not meddle. Boc-

caccio presents to us priests devoted only to avarice and sensuality, nunneries given up to vice, monks engaged in fabricating relics, and manufacturing miracles. Petrarch describes Avignon, in his time the city of the popes—as a "hell upon earth." Dante carries us with him to his Inferno—we descend to its caverns of gloom and horror, we breathe an atmosphere of sulphur, we tread over burning ground, and see the popes and cardinals writhing amidst the flames of the lowest hell. These lessons on church purity and papal infallibility, are read, learnt, and inwardly digested.

The example of pope and priest had rendered the Roman indifferent to religion. The soldiers of Napoleon came, and with them came the philosophy of Voltaire—the doubts and indifference of the Romans took a form and many became Deists. They knew of no purer religion than Roman Catholicism. They had proved the fallibility of the popes, the uselessness of the priest, and can we wonder that without the Bible scepticism became prevalent.

We do not think, however, that the prevalence of infidel opinions in Rome is owing to any process of reasoning. The people have not objected to the ornaments of the churches, the pomp and splendour of the ceremonies, or the gaieties of the festivals. They have no objection to the doctrines of auricular confession, indulgences, transubstantiation, or any of those practices which we consider so opposed to pure Christianity. They have transferred the hatred felt towards their temporal ruler to the head of the church. They see abuses around them and thence hate Christianity. They are not dissatisfied with their religion from conviction but from feeling. Could a pure Christianity be presented to them we are persuaded that it would be joyfully accepted, or could a pope possibly govern his people well, Romans might become Roman Catholics. When Pio Nono commenced his work of reform with what enthusiasm he was hailed. Rome shook off her apathy. She seemed inspired by memories of the past and hopes for the future. The chains fell off from her. Italy was becoming free. The Austrian had almost vacated Lombardy. Leopold granted a constitution to his subjects, and the King of Naples followed his example. Then Pio Nono betrayed his people—then the King of Naples, a coward in the field, a traitor in the cabinet, filled his galleys and dungeons with the best and purest of their country. Leopold silenced clamour in Florence by an army of Austrians, and the people of Rome saw Pio Nono in the Vatican and the soldiers of France in the castle of St. Angelo. It needed but this to destroy the last faint prestige of the popes—and now, the liberator of Italy, the embodiment of the spirit of the age—the pope, whom the people once welcomed with such delirious joy, is the object of their bitter scorn and hatred.

The external aspect of things in Rome is sufficiently gloomy. The people are denied their dearest rights. They are not Catholics, they cannot become Protestants. The pope is issuing new laws with heavy penalties against all who may read the Bible. The privilege which the Americans for a short time possessed of worshipping their God, has been taken away, and even the chaplain of the British embassy must hold his services outside the city walls in a granary. Every act of Pio Nono since his return from Gaeta, shows him to be a genuine pope, and as much opposed to liberty as any of his predecessors. But events are transpiring which must lead to a greater measure of liberty, and a purer faith.

Throughout Europe there are signs of an approaching storm. While rulers are forming holy alliances to keep the nations in slavery, these nations are also becoming leagued together. There are influences at work which will bind them together far more closely than the selfish alliances of kings. Every mile of railroad, every line of telegraph, every steam-boat teaches most effectually lessons of unity and liberty—and treads under its feet national rivalries and prejudices. At present there is a calm, but it is the awful calm which presages the tempest. The sigh of the state prisoner ascends from every fortress, the tramp of

armed men is heard in every street, while despots watch, with the most intense interest and anxiety, the foreboding frowns which darken the brows of their subjects. The storm is at hand—it may not be this year or next year, but it must come, then woe to perjured, traitorous kings. We hate war, but there are evils worse than war. Better the powerful drug which hurries the system to the verge of dissolution, than the disease which quietly but surely drags down to death. Better the destructive tempest which purifies the atmosphere, than the noiseless march of the wasting pestilence. We long for the freedom of Europe, and when France shall be delivered from her bondage, and Hungary a nation of freemen; then and not till then will the Pope leave his regal throne. The press will be unfettered. The Bible will be free. Italy will take her place among the nations, and then we may rejoice, for her redemption is nigh. Errors will be promulgated, but the contest between mind and mind will not be interfered with. Socialism and civilization, Infidelity and Christianity will have a fair field, and who can doubt the issue of the contest.

Whether we consider the hallowed associations connected with Rome, or the character of her citizens, we find many things which lead us to anticipate a pure and prosperous Christianity. So soon as the Roman can open his eyes he will see what the religion of Christ was, and what popes have made it. In the monuments of his own city he will trace the progress of the corruption of that religion from the time when the blood of martyrs smoked in the arena of the Colosseum—to the period of the important discovery by Pio Nono, that there were four persons in the God-head. In the catacombs—the refuge and last resting place of so many thousand persecuted Christians—there are relics which tell us much of early Christianity. Then Christ was all—the door, the vine, the olive branch—the only hope of the sinner, the only happiness of the saint. Then the priest, the saint, the blessed Virgin—the long line of human intercessors with God had not been discovered. There are the early churches with their Christian pulpits, the altar behind which the priest stood, facing the people, showing that there the scriptures were read—the priest was but a man, transubstantiation had not been invented. There is still the Baptistery of St. John Lateran, with its huge font for the immersion of adults—proving, during one period at least of the Christian Church, infant sprinkling was not a divine institution.

Though we can view the gradual corruption of the church, sinners may be forgiven their sins by ascending, on their knees, the Santa Scala a certain number of times. Pulpits are removed from the churches—a large and splendid altar takes their place. The simplicity of the ancient worship is lost, vast cathedrals and pompous ceremonies are introduced. Indulgence for the living and for the dead was written over the door of every church. There arises St. Peter's, a monument of the vast temporal and spiritual power of the successor of St. Peter. From all these—from the catacombs, from the Baptistery, from the simple church, and from the grand cathedral, we hear a voice of the most stirring eloquence. Justification by faith is of Christ, justification by works is of man.

There is much in the character of the Roman which affords ground for hope. His sensibilities are fine, his imagination is powerful. Destitute as he may be of religion, we think that even now his soul yearns for a God, and when the Bible comes we think that he will receive it with avidity. He would not study it with a spirit of cold, heartless criticism. The strains of the prophet, glowing with all the fire of inspiration—with thoughts of such daring sublimity, in language as grand and gorgeous as his own grand gorgeous temple—would captivate his imagination while the thrilling revelation of God in Christ would win his heart. Already has that word been read in Italy, and already have been gathered the first fruits of a glorious harvest. But lately men have been banished from Florence for reading the Bible, and the recent laws of the pope re-prohibiting this divine book

indicates to us that the work of regeneration has begun in Rome.

When men can act with freedom, where can we find such missionaries as Rome herself can produce—men of education, speaking with purity the language of their country? And when men like Gavazzi, with the Bible in their hands and Christian love in their hearts, can address an enthusiastic audience, the influence of indolent priests, a corrupt system, and palpable sophisms will be as chaff before the tempest.

AUSTRALIA.

The following extract from the December number of the *Missionary Herald* will show that the case of Australia is about to be taken up by the English Baptist Missionary Society.

"For some time past much attention has been excited in regard to Australia. Friends there have offered, by letter in the Magazine some months ago, £200 towards the expenses of any one sent out to inquire into the state of the churches. The whole question has been brought before the Committee by the Committee of the Birmingham Auxiliary. Careful and anxious consideration was given to it in successive meetings, and the Committee had the advantage of the knowledge and experience of Mr. John Saunders, formerly of Sydney, and Mr. Born, a merchant of Melbourne, a member of one of the churches there. The Rev. J. Taylor has long had his mind directed to Australia, and the Birmingham Committee strongly recommended the Committee to send him out. Mr. Taylor had a conference with them, when a resolution was adopted encouraging Mr. Taylor to go thither. As many friends in Birmingham and elsewhere are prepared to assist in defraying the expenses of outfit and voyage, the cost to the society will be but small. The proposal is now before our brother, and we trust he will be directed by Divine Wisdom in his determination. Should he go we have great confidence in the success of his efforts to organize the little scattered bands which are in the colony, so as to develop their resources and direct by judicious counsel, their efforts; and we feel sure that ere long they will materially help us in our missionary undertakings. Mr. Taylor will, moreover, help them in the selection of pastors, and thus a board of union and co-operation, not now existing, will soon be created between our society and these numerous, but small churches scattered through South Australia."

It will be remembered that the sum of £100 has been appropriated by our Foreign Mission Board to the English Baptist Missionary Society. We have thus become, indirectly, supporters of this Australian Mission. C.

Welsh Literature.

A Welsh correspondent of the *Athenaeum*, communicates an interesting statement of the high degree of popular intelligence and native culture, enjoyed in the secluded and obscure community of Wales. To speak the native language ungrammatically, is so offensive to the taste and practice of the common people, as to afford evidence of more than a mental inferiority. According to a parliamentary report, the Welsh commonalty greatly surpass in education the same class of Englishmen. The author of the best modern Welsh dictionary, is the son of a day-laborer. The number of books and periodicals printed in Wales, is very large in proportion to the population. The British and Foreign Bible Society circulates more Bibles and Testaments there annually, than in any other equal tract of country in the world. In 1854, they sold 23,221 Welsh Bibles, and 31,086 Welsh Testaments. Of monthly magazines, the Welsh have three Episcopal, two Wesleyan, two Calvinistic Methodist, two Baptist, and two Congregationalists, besides a considerable number of miscellaneous periodicals, weekly, monthly, and one quarterly. The population speaking the vernacular is from six to seven hundred thousand.