

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.

Influence.

BY GEO. W. BUNGAY.

Drop follows drop and swells
With rain the sweeping river,
Word follows word, and tells
A tale that lives forever.

Flake after flake like spirits,
Whose wings the winds discover,
Thought follows thought, and lights
The realm of mind forever.

Beam follows beam to cheer,
The cloud a bolt to shiver;
Throb follows throb, and fear
Gives place to joy forever.

The drop, the flake, the beam
Teach us a lesson ever,
The word, the thought, the dream,
Impress the soul forever.

Baptist History.

For the Christian Messenger.

A SERIES OF LETTERS TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN.

LETTER XXI.

The Reformation Period.

From A. D. 1516 to A. D. 1567.

Continued.

MY YOUNG FRIEND,

The sketch which has been already furnished you describes the position of the Baptists in Germany during the period immediately preceding the disturbances at Munster. I will now trace their history in Switzerland to the same date.

Zuingle, the excellent Swiss reformer, was at one time on the eve of becoming a Baptist. But he resisted the arguments in favour of our principles, and became a violent opposer. The Government of Zurich adopted his policy. Zuingle was a good deal annoyed by the Baptists, for they not only pleaded for believer's baptism; but zealously maintained that none but real christians were fit members of churches. The natural inference was, that as spiritual societies could not be governed by carnal men, the union of church and state must be dissolved, and each party attend to its own affairs: the state, to things temporal—the church, to things religious. This was going too far for Zuingle. He repudiated the idea of a spiritual church, regarding it as a sheer impossibility. He could not relinquish the notion that worldly power and law were requisite for the establishment of the faith. Hence he concluded that the Baptist theory must be treated as resistance to authority, and its supporters put down by the secular arm. Poor man! he fell a victim to his own principles. He was slain on the battle-field of Cappel, while in official attendance, as chaplain, on the Protestant army, fighting against the Papists, Oct. 11, 1531.

It was about the year 1523 that the Baptists first appeared in Switzerland. Their numbers rapidly increased. The appeal to scripture on behalf of their sentiments was rendered more forcible by the innocency of their lives. Even Bullinger, who was strongly prejudiced against them, was compelled to confess it. "They had," said he, "an appearance of a spiritual life; they were excellent in character; they sighed much; they spake nobly and with excellence, so that they thereby acquired admiration and authority, or respect, with simple pious people. For the people said, 'Let others say what they will of the Dippers, we see in them nothing but what is excellent, and hear from them nothing else but that we should not swear or do wrong to any one, that every one ought to do what is right, that every one must live golly and 'holy lives; we see no wickedness in them.' Thus they have deceived many people in this land." Meshovius, adverting to the views of men at that time on this point, writes thus:—"Some, say they, write what they wish of the Anabaptists; that they are given up to sedition, and plot the

destruction of the Christian common weal. But how false this is, is clearly manifest from their lives, actions, and doctrine, since they neither swear, nor blaspheme, nor seek their own things; but you will see them promote those only which are of Christ, which are conformable to the scriptures; and will any one say that these are not true, nor especially worthy of a Christian man?" (Quoted in Martyrology, i. 7, 8.)

Public disputations were much in fashion at that time in Switzerland. They have rarely proved of any real service to the cause of truth, since it is obvious that the man who had the most fluent tongue, the readiest memory, the keenest wit, and the greatest amount of self-possession, was most likely to prevail, whether he was attached to the right or the wrong side. Nor was it likely that either party would acknowledge defeat. Perhaps the only benefit that resulted from them was, that many persons had an opportunity of hearing the truth who would not otherwise have enjoyed it, and in some instances they were led to further inquiry, which issued in their joining the reformers.

Three disputations were held at Zurich in the year 1525. In all of them, according to their adversaries, the Baptists were worsted, notwithstanding which they resolutely retained their sentiments, and declared themselves ready to seal them with their blood. But the magistracy did not rely on arguments. They issued an edict, prohibiting believer's baptism, enjoining the baptism of children, and threatening that the disobedient should be dealt with severely. And so they were. Some were imprisoned, some were banished. Still they persevered. Whereupon, in 1526, another edict was issued, ordering that if any baptized others, or submitted to baptism (re-baptism they called it,) they should be "drowned without mercy." Zuingle, I am sorry to say, approved this infamous enactment. It was no vain threat. Felix Mantz was drowned at Zurich in 1527. Jacob Falk and Heine Reyman were drowned in 1528. These three were ministers of the gospel. Anneken of Friburg, a christian female, was drowned at that place in 1529; and her body was afterwards buried. Many others suffered, whose names are not recorded. They did not inflict capital punishment at Basle, where the Baptists abounded, but they scourged them, threw them into dungeons, or banished them, hoping to wear them out by suffering. The great Erasmus resided there at that time. He bore honourable testimony on behalf of the sufferers. "The Anabaptists," said he, "although they everywhere abound in great numbers, have nowhere obtained the churches for their use. They are to be commended above all others for the innocency of their lives, but are oppressed by other sects, as well as by the orthodox," (Catholics). Such were the men, according to an opponent, whom Protestants as well as Papists sought to exterminate. It is gratifying to know that though they were treated so shamefully their characters would endure the scrutiny of keen-eyed observers.

I mentioned Felix Mantz. He was a native of Zurich, and had received a liberal education. Having early adopted the principles of the Reformation he became an intimate friend of Zuingle and other Swiss reformers. But in the year 1522 he began to doubt the Scriptural authority of infant baptism and of the church constitution which then existed at Zurich. These doubts issued in decision. Mantz became a Baptist, upon which his intercourse with the reformers ceased. He took part in the public disputations at Zurich, and suffered imprisonment in consequence. After this he preached in the fields and woods, whither the people flocked in crowds to hear him, and there he baptized those who professed faith. For this the Zurich magistrates denounced him as a rebel, and about the close of 1526 he was apprehended and lodged in the tower of Wellenberg. On the 5th of January, 1527, he was drowned. "As he came down from the Wellenberg to the fish-market," says Bullinger, "and was led through the shambles to the boat, he praised

God that he was about to die for His truth. For Anabaptism was right, and founded on the word of God, and Christ had foretold that his followers would suffer for the truth's sake. And the like discourse he urged much, contradicting the preacher who attended him. On the way his mother and brother came to him, and exhorted him to be stedfast; and he persevered in his folly, even to the end. When he was bound upon the hurdle and was about to be thrown into the stream by the executioner, he sang with a loud voice, In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum, meum. 'Into thine hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.' And herewith was he drawn into the water by the executioner, and drowned."

"It is reported here," says Capita, writing to Zuingle from Strasburg, on the 27th January, 1527, "that your Felix Mantz hath suffered punishment, and died gloriously; by which the cause of truth and piety, which you sustain, is weighed down exceedingly."—(Martyrology i. 12-16). No wonder. Persecution will "weigh down" any cause. And the Protestant persecution is the most hateful of all.

Balthazar Hubmeyer requires a more lengthened notice. This eminent man was a Bavarian; born at Friedburg, about the year 1480. He studied in the high school of that city, intending to become a physician. But he exchanged medicine for theology, and in 1512, being already noted for learning and eloquence, he was appointed professor of divinity and principal preacher at Ingolstadt, where he laboured between three and four years. In 1516 he removed to Ratisbon, and preached in the cathedral to immense throngs. His mistaken zeal was directed against the Jews, who were driven from the city, and their synagogue pulled down, on its site was built a chapel dedicated to the Virgin, and a wonder-working image placed over the door, to which vast numbers repaired in pilgrimage from the neighbouring countries. Hubmeyer at that time.

The blindness was not of long duration. The report of Luther's movements and of Zuingle's preaching at Einsidlen led him to inquiry, and the novelties of Rome were soon abandoned. Before he left Ratisbon he had made considerable progress in practical reformation. He had translated the gospels and epistles into German. He celebrated service in that language instead of Latin. He administered the Lord's Supper in both kinds. He admonished the people to pray no more to the saints, and he destroyed images.

The next three years of his life were spent at Waldshut, a town in Baden, where he preached with great success. There also his religious views became matured, and he fully embraced Protestantism. In 1522 he returned to Ratisbon, and continued there a year, propagating the principles of the Reformation. When he resumed his residence at Waldshut he formed an acquaintance with the Swiss reformers, particularly Zuingle and Ecolampadius, and enjoyed frequent opportunities of intercourse with them. He assisted in conducting the great disputation with the Papists at Zurich, in the autumn of 1523. A visit to St. Gall was attended by a wondrous manifestation of blessing. He preached the word "in demonstration of the spirit and of power." His labours at Waldshut were so successful that the other ministers yielded to the force of truth, and Romanism was abandoned. But Austrian influence was predominant in Bader, so that Hubmeyer soon found himself in a perilous position, and was compelled to seek concealment. After much suffering he repaired to Zurich, hoping to enjoy rest and refuge there.

But Zuingle was not now Hubmeyer's friend. Hubmeyer's researches had issued in the discovery that infant baptism is only a human tradition. He had communicated his thoughts to Zuingle and Ecolampadius, who were also in a doubting state of mind on that subject, and had sought their assistance. They remained Pædobaptists, while he, following his convictions, took the final step, by which he was utterly estranged from his former brethren. He was baptized, with one hundred and ten others,

in a village not far from Waldshut, by William Roubli, a Swiss Baptist. He himself baptized three hundred persons in the course of the next few months. A work on baptism, which he published about the same time, received a "virulent and violent" reply from Zuingle. "I believe and know," Hubmeyer said, "that Christendom shall not receive its rising aright, unless baptism and the Lord's supper are brought to their original purity." These were truthful words!

"About July, 1525, Hubmeyer entered Zurich, and sought a refuge at the Green Shield with a few friends and faithful followers. His coming was soon known among his fellow-believers, and soon also to the Council of Zurich. He was sought out, and immured in the cells of the courthouse. For many days and weeks Zuingle and his old associates endeavoured to shake his adhesion to the truth. At last the torture was applied. Protestant historians say a promise of recantation was willingly given and written with his own hand. Alas! how willingly! the pains of the rack were the sharp and effectual arguments. On the 22nd December he is led to the minister, and placed at a desk facing that from which Zuingle long and vehemently declaimed against the heresies his friend is there come to confess. The sermon is past, and every eye turns to the rising form of the sick Balthazar. Though not old, his trials have told on his robust frame; and with a quivering voice he begins to read from the paper of recantation before him. As his articulation becomes distinct, he is heard to affirm that infant baptism is without the command of Christ. As the words continue to flow, and add certainty to the incredulous ears of the crowd in the thronged cathedral, murmurs float ominously in the resounding roof, increasing by degrees to audible expressions of approbation or of horror. Zuingle's voice rises above all. He quietly conveyed to his cell in the Wellenberg.

"Redoubled efforts were afterwards made to recall the mischief that had been done. Probably renewed tortures were applied or threatened; for in a few months, the sufferer is said to have made a public recantation both at Zurich and St. Gall; but with so little satisfaction to his persecutors, that, although released from prison, he was kept in the town under strict surveillance. About the middle of the year 1526, by the aid of distant friends, he succeeded in escaping from Zurich, and after preaching at Constance for a short time, he journeyed to Moravia, passing through Augsburg on his way. There he proclaimed the gospel freely, and in all the region round about, baptizing many, and forming churches of Christ after his word.

"In the year 1528 he was arrested, probably at Bruim, where he was teacher of the church, at the command of King Ferdinand, and sent to Vienna. After some days he was thrown into the dungeons of the castle of Gritsenstein. At his own request he was visited by Dr. Faber, of Gran, in Hungary, who had been in former days his friend. Their interviews, at which two other learned men assisted, lasted the greater part of three days. The substance of their discussions Faber afterwards published, and hints that on several points Hubmeyer yielded to the cogency of his arguments. A written exposition of his views was afterwards sent to King Ferdinand and by Hubmeyer; but no material change in them could have taken place, since he was immediately sentenced to death. He steadfastly went to the scaffold, and on the 10th March, 1528, from the midst of burning flames and embers, his spirit ascended to that region where those that have come out of great tribulation suffer and weep no more. The partner of his life was also partner of his sufferings: imprisoned with him, she too was led to Vienna, and in the river Danube found a watery grave" (*Ibid.* p. 61-75).

Hubmeyer was a learned man. He published several valuable works, and has the honor of being placed in the Romish prohibitory Index, in the first class of proscribed authors.