

The 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.

For the Christian Messenger.

LINES

On the death of the late Geo. Starratt, of East Dalhousie.

BY A FRIEND.

'Twas night, and all without was still,
For nature seemed at rest.
Not so within—a sickly form
Down to the dust is pressed.

Disease, and death relentless hold
The victim of their prey,
But soon the priceless part escapes
And mounts the heavenly way.

There, washed in Christ's most precious blood,
No blemish can be seen,
Ever to bask in heaven's own light
With nought to intervene.

The mortal part that still remains,
Must crumble back to dust,
And wait the resurrection morn
To yield the sacred trust.

Then cease to mourn, in God confide,
And trust your every care,
On that Almighty gracious arm,
Which can all burdens bear.

Yes, partner, trust in Jesus' name,
But a short time at most,
Earth's trials ended, you shall join
With all the ransomed host.

Ye children too, prepare to meet
The parent gone before,
And all that glorious company,
On Casaan's blissful shore.

Brethren and sisters you may see
How true, "all flesh is grass,"
The glory of man, as flowers fade,
The truth can never pass.

That truth gives promises to those
Who trust the incarnate God,
But unbelieving souls shall fall
Beneath the Almighty Word.

France and England.

For the Christian Messenger.

Infidelity in France.

THOUGH there is not now in France the blank Atheism which once she so loudly preached, still infidelity, a disregard for and a disbelief in Christianity, abounds. The nation has not returned to the fold of Rome, nor has she become Protestant.

There are many who long for liberty—they yearn for deliverance from the tyrant's arm. Again and again, when the boon seemed to be within their reach, it has been snatched away. They have seen the church, while professing an attachment to liberty, again and again betray her, and now they see her giving all her influence to sustain on the throne one, who, whatever he may be, has in many respects good qualities; has violated his oath, defrauded France of her rights and usurped his throne. The spectacle presented by the church sustaining, with all her might, a usurper, creates and supports infidelity. But few know anything of religion except as the support of tyrants. In consequence those who hate tyranny hate all that they know of religion.

Then again, there are many who bewail the miseries which they endure and which they see around them. They sigh for plenty for themselves and envy the prosperity of others. They have faith in wild schemes for the perfecting of the race, and really believe in Equality and Fraternity. The last French revolution testified how prevalent such views were. Socialism is infidel

not so much because it openly abjures Christianity, but because it lays down rules, prescribes conduct, and fosters hopes which every revelation of Christianity condemns.

Then there is a sort of natural religion held by many. While infidelity is fashionable, yet it does not wear that former disgusting repulsive form. Christianity is not ridiculed; on the contrary, it is spoken of very respectfully. It is a religion that may do very well for the illiterate; and doubtless its abolition would lead to much inconvenience. It is more beautiful even than paganism, and much more suitable for the present age. So far from denying the existence of God, his character is made the theme of beautiful and poetical essays. This infidelity to which we allude, knows nothing of sin, nothing of offended justice, nothing of the need of atonement, nothing of holiness. It may admire Christianity, but it needs it not. It views man as a little lower than the angels, and only hindered from rising to a level with them, by bad government and a few other similar obstacles. It loves to regard the beautiful in nature, to become enraptured with green fields, sombre forests, gorgeous sunsets, and then to imagine that these raptures are genuine devotional extacies. Religion requires not a holy lip, but a refined taste and an excitable temperament. Devotion and piety consist in admiration of what is grand and beautiful. Christianity is true only in proportion as it meets the taste. We peruse the writings of Lamartine and others who represent the views of the more intelligent of the people, and every where we meet with abundance of respect for religion—abundance of admiration for Christ, but no Christianity. All classes of the nation seem to be infected with infidelity in some form. All who long for liberty, all the restless spirits who anticipate a sensual millennium, nearly all the leaders of thought have turned away from Roman Catholicism, who having abandoned this they are without religion. The history of France within the last century would lead us to expect even a worse state of things.

In tracing the causes of infidelity in France we turn at once to the conduct and the teachings of the church of Rome.

The church affirmed that she was holy, catholic and apostolic. The nation saw her leading on the crusades against the Albigenses with a cool, calculating cruelty, with an unfathomable depth of falsehood and treachery that would have filled with remorse the breast of the most brutal savage. Could this church be holy, catholic and apostolic? If so, Christianity was not the religion of mercy and of righteousness.

Again the nation saw the professed church of Christ armed against her foes. She who called herself the spouse of Christ went forth by night, to victims whom her oaths had beguiled, and then she perpetrated that crime at which humanity still stands aghast. And when the massacre of St. Bartholemew had been perpetrated, she entered into the temple of the most high God, and thanked him for the results of her perjury and midnight murders. If she were the beloved spouse of Christ, Christianity might well be considered superfluous. Men could be sufficiently treacherous, sufficiently cruel without the teachings and examples of the representatives of religion.

Nor was the conduct of the church after her crimes fitted to remove the doubts which must have crept into the minds of men. Before her enemies were thus ruthlessly annihilated, there seemed some necessity for circumspection. It would not have been prudent to allow the Protestants to engross all the piety and virtue of the land. There were in the church of Rome good and virtuous men, men who were anxious to do

right, who loved and feared God. Men like Arnold, and Pascal, and Fenelon, and Massillon—though they scarcely found their grave in peace, and knew by experience what persecution was. But now the church was triumphant, there was no longer necessity for any thing more than pretension to faith and love.

Voltaire and Rousseau were not the authors of Infidelity in France, they were but its ministers. They found a nation not trustful and devout, but doubtful, reflective, suspicious—unable to give utterance to the horrible thoughts which raged within. The shallow scepticism of Voltaire, and the silly sentimentality of Rousseau were sparks which fell upon a magazine of powder, and then came the frightful explosion, which shook the whole continent.

The church was enjoying a luxurious repose after her arduous labours, when suddenly a frightful gulf yawned beneath her, and when the cathedral of Notre Dame was polluted by the orgies of a Parisian mob, when the temples of worship were all desecrated, when religion was decreed to be a lie, and death declared to be an eternal sleep, when priests were massacred by thousands, and the faithful were slaughtered like sheep—then were the saints avenged. For the blood of the Albigenses, for the massacre of the Huguenots, for the thousand wrongs which the church had originated or sanctioned, an account was demanded. She had sown the wind, and reaped the whirlwind. She had extirpated Protestantism, and France had become a nation of frenzied, blood-thirsty atheists. For the atrocities of the first Revolution, for the irreligion that now appears so extensive in the land, the church can find an author not very far away.

One cannot contemplate the future of France without feelings of gloomy foreboding. The nation is restless under despotism, and will be: yet she is not prepared for the enjoyment of liberty, and until she is christianized she cannot be. Atheists and Deists, and Pantheists, and Rationalists, are not the materials of which free and law-abiding republics are formed. The impatience at all restraint, the longing for license, rather than liberty, which has been exhibited, demand a despotism. France needs a religion which can lead her people to submit to just laws, which can place a check on wild and base passions, before she can hopefully demand self-government. Where shall she find such a religion? Not in the church of Rome, but in the Bible. Perhaps the sufferings through which she has passed, may lead her to crave a faith compatible with liberty, but a faith which checks sin, while it procures forgiveness.

For the Christian Messenger.

LONDON CORRESPONDENCE.

Sketches of English Events.

THE PEACE CONFERENCES AND THE WAR.

LONDON, FEB. 29, 1856.

DEAR SIR,—My last letter noticed doubts and anticipations felt on the approaching Peace Conferences, and the sincerity of Russia in accepting the proposals offered by the Allies. In the absence of facts, rumour has been busy. Stocks, sensitive as aspen leaves, have risen and fallen as reports varied in tenor. Special correspondents quoted from "letters on good authority," and the whispered remarks of great ones in salons and cabinets. Cases were made out with ingenuity, and as ingeniously exploded. The result was, everybody imagined at one time they knew all; and shortly after, found they knew nothing for certain.

On Monday last, however, the Conference began. The first step taken was to agree

on an armistice for a month—more out of compliment than anything else, as operations cannot commence again for that period, and the blockade is not to be set aside.

There has been much talk about Nicholas not being included in the Black Sea neutrality, its situation lying on an estuary opening into that sea. Its great naval arsenal, however, where ships of war are now building, render it of such importance, that but little would be gained by the destruction of Sebastopol if that were allowed to exist; Turkey could then still be threatened, and the power of Russia but little mitigated. It says much, however, for Russia's sincerity, that she has consented to its reduction; and the allies are too astute to have overlooked so necessary a measure for their own purposes.

The same argument applies to the Aland Isles. Russia could there overcome Sweden and threaten all European commerce by commanding the passage of the Sound. This also has been agreed to.

Accounts vary as to the position of Russia—some affirming that she is already reduced to extremity, bankrupt in money and in men, especially the latter; others again showing that her position is good in Asia, the Baltic better defended than ever, and her resources and resolution quite equal to further campaigns. Our unity with our allies, and resources, are unquestionable. The army is now in prime condition and spirits; and never before did such a magnificent fleet float on the ocean as the allies can furnish, if necessary. Our preparations are not relaxed; already the advanced squadron is ready to sail, and officers have received orders to join their regiments at once.

The whole aspect of affairs at present points to this—that Russia will try to get as favourable terms as she can, point by point; but that she will not risk a rupture by insisting on the deviation or relaxation of any of the bases agreed to as preliminaries. England, on her side, has no wish to unnecessarily humiliate her foe; and with these, there is every probability of an amicable and speedy adjustment.

Morally, there is little doubt but that Russia, having wilfully plunged us into war whether we would or no, ought to pay part if not all the expenses. But moral right and political expediency are widely asunder. To insist on, or even to ask for, such compensation, would be to erect an impassable barrier to negotiations. We should have to fight on; and even if successful, should spend more in the conflict than we could ever hope to get in return. Thus we must rest satisfied if peace can be attained on the bases appointed, (which in France are considered as fully meeting the objects we fought for), and trust to the influence of Russia's late experience as a guarantee that for many years to come she will rest content with what *Le Nord* announces as her intention—to create railways, and cultivate her trade and manufactures. Pity it is she did not do this years ago, instead of blandly dreaming of Eastern aggression, and planting the double eagle on the minarets of St. Sophia!

THE FUTURE OF TURKEY.

"What is to be done with Turkey?" is a question that puzzles wiser heads than mine. If the old Mussulman principle made Turkey "a sick man" before the war—if, before the encroaching light of Western purer faith, her own cramping, exclusive, and effete trials brought decay and retrogression on her people—what is the result now? We have for the time turned Turkey out of her own house, and garnished it according to our own fashion. The old gen-