

THE RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCER,

AND

Bible Society, Missionary, and Sabbath School ADVOCATE.

VOL. I.

SAINT JOHN, N. B., MARCH 1, 1853.

NO. 5

THE RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCER

IS PUBLISHED ON THE
FIRST AND FIFTEENTH OF EACH MONTH,
In Saint John, N. B., by
E. McLEOD AND JOSEPH NOBLE,
At One Shilling and Three Pence per Volume of Twelve
Numbers, in advance.

Communications, Orders, or Remittances for this paper
may be directed, (post paid,) to B. J. UNDERHILL, Saint
John, N. B.

Church History.

SUFFERINGS OF MAROLLES AND LEFEVRE, AF- TER THE REVOCATION OF THE EDICT OF NANTES.

In reading the records handed down to us of "martyrs," and "martyrdom" for the sake of Christ, the mind is struck with the vast amount of suffering which must yet have remained unrecorded; and our imagination instinctively pictures the dread disclosures of that day, when works of darkness, witnessed by no human eye, and delineated by no human pen, shall be at length, one and all, "made manifest." Who can tell what has been transacted in the infernal dungeons of the Inquisition? There are sufferings more dreadful than those of the sword or the axe, or even the stake. These have constituted a sharp but short passage to the repose and bliss of paradise; and the names of the 'glorious sufferers' have been handed down to us, and most justly too, as examples of triumphant faith. But who can tell the numbers that may have been reserved to a more terrible endurance,—aye, perhaps many a one, whose tale of woe has been scarcely if at all heard of, and whose name will remain unknown to man till it is recognized 'before the Father and his holy angels.'

Such, we apprehend, to have been the lot of more than a few persecuted Protestants, after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. For above eighty years, the Reformed faith had been tolerated in France, when, in 1685, Louis XIV., instigated by the councils and intrigues of Jesuits, determined that this privilege should be conceded no longer. But the Bartholomew massacre of the preceding century had excited universal disgust. It was therefore now determined, that the conversion of the Protestants, as it was termed,—in other words, their extermination,—should not cost one drop of blood. Whether or not this resolution was strictly carried into effect, is a matter of comparatively little consequence. Certainly exile, proscription, torture, condemnation to the galleys, and every imaginable cruelty, short of death, were inflicted without remorse. Whilst the King was assured by his perfidious attendants, that "no less than 34,000 conversions had been effected, by measures of extraordinary mildness."

About a fourth part of the population of France, was at that time Protestant. Such a persecution, as in similar cases, tended to separate the chaff from the wheat. A large multitude became outwardly converts to a system, which they despised or abhorred. But many were ready to endure any suffering in life, or in death, for "the name of the Lord Jesus."

Condemnation to the galleys for life, with all its fearful accompaniments, was a sentence by no means unfrequent.

A galley, was a long, flat, single decked vessel, with oars, so built as to be unfit to stand against rough seas, and in which sails were for the most part useless. Each ship usually contained 300 slaves, and 150 men, including officers, soldiers, seamen, and servants. Five slaves were attached to every oar. It was a punishment allotted to some of the most worthless of criminals. Of the severity of the toil and sufferings to which they were thus exposed, some estimate may be formed, from the account of M. Bion, a Roman Catholic chaplain to some of the galleys, who afterwards became a convert to the true faith. He says:—"In the winter of 1703-4, on the coasts of Monaco and Antibes, the poor creatures were exposed to all the rigour of snow and wind during the night, after a hard day of rowing. The only comfort they asked for, was the liberty of smoking; but this was denied, under a pain of the bastinado. Their couch was a board, a foot and a-half broad; and those who had the unfortunate honour of lying near the officers, did not presume to stir so much as a hand, lest their chains should awaken them. The fatigue of tagging at the oar, is extraordinary. They must rise to draw the stroke, and fall back again! and through the violent exertion, in all seasons, the perspiration trickles down their harassed limbs; and lest they should fail (as they often do from faintness), there is a gang-board runs through the middle of the ship, on which are posted three comites, or officers, with the rank of boatswain, who, whenever they think an oar does not keep time with the rest, unmercifully exercise their power on the man they suspect. The wand with which they strike being long, it is often felt by two or three men innocent of being

even suspected, to spare their strength. Each man receives in the morning, a pretty good supply of biscuit, and at ten o'clock, a porringer of soup made with oil and beans or peas, the pulse being often so stale and musty, as to be unfit for use; it does not deserve the name of soup, sometimes being little better than water, with a few peas or beans swimming on the top. When on duty, they have about two-thirds of a pint of wine. A close dark room, the only passage in it for air being admitted by the scuttle through which all must pass, being appropriated for the sick. On each end of this room, there are scaffolds, on which the sick are laid promiscuously without beds, or anything under them. If this place be full, and any more are sick, they are stretched along the cables; in the winter of 1703, we had threescore sick men in this horrid room, dreadfully annoyed by vermin. When my duties required my attendance there, I was soon covered, it being impossible to defend myself from them. I was obliged, notwithstanding, to stay in this gloomy abode, to confess such as were ready to expire."

Such, then, was the toil—such then the anguish, to which Popish cruelty recklessly and hopelessly doomed its victims however refined by habits, or education, or even exalted rank. Some there were whose health, from the first, was utterly unequal to the task assigned them; but the better treatment which they received in consequence of such affliction, may be gathered from the experience of two distinguished sufferers.

M. Louis de Marolles, of an ancient French family, held the offices of King's Councillor, and Receiver of Consignments in the distant provinces. On attempting to flee with his family, at this disastrous period, he was arrested. They were set at liberty, but he—torn from their embraces—was condemned to perpetual slavery in the galleys, and his property was forfeited to the crown. For many months he was detained in the gloomy prison of Les Tournelles, until the whole of the convicts were ready to set out. Here, his place of confinement measured thirty feet in length by nine in breadth, and fiftythree unfortunate individuals were its inmates; many invalids among them envied the condition of dogs or horses. During two months he was confined with seven diseased criminals, but it was so dark that he could not discern their faces. Nor was this the worst. Filthy communication, oaths, and blasphemy resounded on every side. It was only when his wicked companions were hushed in sleep, or when, in fine weather they were permitted to go out, with the exception of six, among whom he was one, that he could find an opportunity for meditation and prayer. He had several attacks of tertian fever, but recovered sufficiently to proceed to his place of destination. When arrived there, however, his health so failed as to incapacitate him for hard labour, and the consequence was simply this—he had to exchange his galley for a dungeon! It was damp and cold, and without light enough to save him from bruising himself against the walls. His clothing was wholly insufficient. Although he had money enough to supply his wants, food was dealt out to him with the most negligent carelessness. On one occasion he was left three days without any food at all, and at other times received it but twice in twenty-four hours. During one winter no fire was allowed him; during another, a month's firing only; and during another it was granted for only fifteen days. And in this solitary and desolate abode was poor Marolles doomed to drag out the whole remainder of his existence,—for five years!

M. Le Fevre was a barrister, well-connected, and possessing everything which could make life agreeable. After studying at Geneva or Orleans, where he took his degree, he repaired to Paris, and was admitted one of the advocates of the Court of Parliament. Scarcely had he entered on this advantageous course, when the Edict of Nantes was revoked, and he was compelled to seek safety by flight. But he, too, was arrested, tried at Besancon, and also condemned to the galleys. On his journey he seems to have endured greater sufferings than those of Marolles. At Chalons the two exiles met, and were afterwards, for a short time, associated in the hospital at Marseilles. Their doom was similar. Unfit for work, Le Fevre was, likewise, soon heartlessly turned into a dungeon! A vault of irregular shape, which had been formerly used as a stable, but had been found too damp for horses, was considered a receptacle quite good enough for an incapacitated galley-slave. The rack and manger remained, and light was admitted only through a grating in the door. Afflicted with rheumatism, and unable to sleep for pain and cold, he was allowed no fire. Like Marolles, he was cheated out of his allowance of food, and, to add to his affliction, his books were taken away. But, unlike his companion in tribulation, not merely five, but sixteen long years passed away, before death's welcome messenger unlocked the prison door, and introduced his emancipated spirit into the mansions of rest, and light, and love!

We have heard much of solitary confinement, and of its terrific consequences, when inflicted for any protracted period, even under circumstances of comparative comfort. What martyrdom, then, could have equalled the protracted sufferings of these good men, accustomed, as they had been, to comforts of every kind—the refinements of educated soci-

ety, the endearments of a home,—whilst at a distance from all whom they loved—hour after hour—week after week—month after month—year after year, passed away in pain, and hunger, and nakedness, and brought no eye to pity, no hand to succor, and no hope of change or relief, till death should put a period to their sorrow!

And yet they were not alone. Divine grace and succor is equal to any emergency. The oppressor could not prevent their free, emancipated souls from rejoicing in a presence which could cheer the darkness of their lonesome hours and confiding in a love which could 'supply all their need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.' We have taken a glimpse into their abodes of misery. Let us now hold brief converse with the spirit which sustained it.

On his journey, and when chained to the other prisoners, so happy and resigned did Marolles feel, that he assured his family that the chains he wore about his neck, so far from shaking his resolution, had confirmed and strengthened it. "God," he said, "manifested himself to him in quite a different manner to what he did in prosperity." "He has delightfully communicated Himself to me by the swiftness of His consolations. I am not terrified by the prospect of my sufferings; if they are violent, I am not in a condition to bear up against them long; if they are moderate, God will continue his favour and goodness to me while they last." "Fear not for me; by God's grace, my constancy is fixed upon a solid foundation. I care not whether I die by sea or land—in Europe, or America. Do not grieve; we must all be persuaded that God has ordered all for our good." After being confined to the dungeon, he writes: "Be not disturbed at the new cross which God has laid upon me, I will bear it with the submission which I owe my God and Father who is full of tenderness and compassion towards me. Question not my beloved, the omnipotence of God; even though I should lose my life, remember my Saviour has said, 'Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall inherit life eternal.' At another time, after giving an account of his privations, he states with much thankfulness that after three years of suffering, God had raised him up a friend. "A very pious person visited me, and seeing me so miserably clad, immediately went out to fetch me some of his linen, but this I could not accept. He interested himself so warmly for me that he procured me a whole galley slave's suit, and compelled the major to give me a pair of shoes out of my own money; so that, through the benevolence of this person, I am better clothed than I have been since my captivity. He has also procured me, for the last year, half a lamp full of oil daily, from the King's lieutenant, thus giving me an opportunity of reading the Scriptures more than I did before, as the lamp affords me light for seven or eight hours. I have fallen down and struck my head, this giddiness I impute to going so long without food, but am now better than I have been for the last forty years. Within the last three months, they have supplied me with three little loaves a-day, and some soup, since which my head is better. After this comfortable news, I conjure you, in the name of God, not to let your suspicions trouble the rest and satisfaction I find in the possession of His favour." In his last letter, which was dated the 24th of March, 1692, only three months before he exchanged his dungeon of misery to "be with Christ," he writes thus:—"God has filled my heart with joy, in patience I possess my soul; thus he makes the days of my affliction to pass away swiftly, and the bread and water of affliction with which He affords me delicious repasts."

So severe were Le Fevre's sufferings during the first years of his miserable solitude, that he acknowledges he was occasionally tempted to wish for death, but these suggestions did not last long. To a beloved relative he thus wrote:—"Be sensible of my misery, but be yet more sensible of the glory and happiness to which that misery tends. Jesus Christ hath conquered death for me, and through Him I shall be enabled to pull off the mask which he wears as King of Terrors; the idea of living long is more terrible than that of dying soon, but it is more honorable to endure the most wretched life than to desire death." "They deny me," he wrote at another time, "all communion with the living, and also with the dead by means of books, but God will be glorified by my sufferings; but the longer they last the more glory will abound to God; all I desire is, that He would work more powerfully in me both to will and do, according to His good pleasure. In the tenth year of his captivity, and six years before its termination by death, he bitterly complains of his want of faith, and reproaches himself for having too earnestly desired his liberation from the dungeon; but adds, "I expect all from the grace of God; He has inclined my heart to listen to His voice and supports me with His hand when I am fainting, raises me when I am fallen, sustains me in all weakness, and protects me from those who would swallow me up. God's design is doubtless to lead me into that city whereof glorious things are spoken; God is always in my heart, although I am not always sensible of His presence; He is stronger than all, no one can pluck me out of His hand."

It is some satisfaction to find that during the latter part of his captivity a little alleviation was afforded him. A benevolent Protestant lady, Madam Salicruffe, was allowed to