

CHRISTIAN VISITOR.

A Family Newspaper: devoted to Religious and General Intelligence.

REV. I. E. BILL,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, good will toward Men."

EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

VOL. 7.

SAINT JOHN, NEW-BRUNSWICK, MAY 26, 1854.

NO. 19.

THE BRIDGE OF FAITH.

"Faith builds a bridge from this world to the next O'er death's dark gulf, and all its horrors hides."

YOUNG.

Trumpet tones from Sinai's mountain
Roused me from a careless sleep,
Then I saw my feet were standing
On a dread and slippery steep.

Downward, downward, as the current
Drifteth in its ceaseless flow,
So my steps were gliding ever
Towards the fearful gulf below.

Round me wreathed a chain of iron,
Every link with poison fraught;
In the fires of sinful passion
Had that baleful chain been wrought.

Yet beyond that gulf unfathomed,
Lay a land of joy and light;
Glimpses of its dazzling glory
Burst upon my longing sight.

And the songs of happy angels,
Floating on the zephyr's breath,
Mingled with the wail and murmur
Of that mournful river death.

Then I cried, "O must I perish
Gazing on the shores of bliss?
Who shall break this chain of iron?
Who shall bridge this dark abyss?"

Then I heard a friend and brother
Saying, "Faith dissolves the chain,
And the tears of contrite sorrow
Falling like the gentle rain.

Thou must also rise and labor,
There is much for thee to do,
Thou by faith must bridge the chasm
Which thou tremblest now to view.

"Vain," I cried, "thy words are fruitless!
These are hopes which but deceive—
Hands like mine, so weak and sinful,
Such a work can ne'er achieve."

"Faith," he said, "is strong and holy,
Grasping God's eternal throne;
He hath laid a strong foundation,
Jesus is the corner-stone.

Therefore cease thine anxious doubting,
Rise and build the structure fair;
If thy hands are weak and sinful,
Lay the stones with tears and prayer.

On this strong and sure foundation
Place the pillars of thy faith;
Work, until the arch uprising,
Spans the fearful gulf of death.

Every deed to bless a brother,
Every word to honor God,
Shall be wrought into the structure,
Fair as angel feet have trod.

Day by day, as time flows onward,
Toiling, thou shalt see it rise,
Till it bear thy trembling footsteps,
To the portals of the skies.

Then I rose, and lo, the fetters
From my ransomed soul were gone,
And the clouds, so black with vengeance,
Like a curtain were withdrawn.

And I said, "I'll bridge the chasm,
Laying every stone with care,
Wreathing every snowy pillar
With the 'golden chain of prayer.'"

(From the American Baptist Memorial.)

REV. J. G. ONCKEN.

[CONCLUDED.]

His next letter to the Board was dated,—"In Prison."

On the evening of Wednesday, May 13, 1840, as the disciples were gathered together for prayer, a file of soldiers and policemen marched into the midst of the congregation, dispersed the worshippers, and haled Mr. O.,

and his assistants, Brn. Kobner and Lange, to the felon's prison. Here his first heroic utterance is:—"The Lord Jesus has counted me also worthy to suffer bonds for his sake." After one or two examinations, in which he was threatened, and in which he declared his right and announced his determination to persevere in the line of conduct he had hitherto pursued, on the 23rd of May, the following sentence, reciting the crimes for which he was condemned, was read to him, and ordered to be executed.

"Whereas John Gerhard Oncken has continued to preach, baptize and administer the Lord's Supper, according to his own confession, notwithstanding the prohibition of the authorities, therefore it is ordered that he be imprisoned for four weeks, and pay the costs of his prosecution, and be informed measures will be resorted to, in case of any future transgression of the orders of the Senate."

Brn. Kobner and Lange were his fellow prisoners, though for a shorter period. His wife was suffered to visit him in prison, but not without the presence of the keeper—not to utter a word, in confidence, of sympathy or affection, not to converse about any thing relating to his imprisonment. He was even permitted to write, but no letter could be sent to a friend without being first submitted to the officers for inspection. He inscribed all over the white walls of his prison room, passages from the word of God, to be pondered by his successors. With cheerful patience and trust in God, this barbarous imprisonment was endured, and he wrote from his cell—"I am perfectly happy without fear or anxiety, and I find it good to be here." "I am sure that this is the best way for me and the Lord will liberate me in his own time." As an evidence that no such persecution could subdue his courage, or cause him to waver in his devoted obedience to his Master he thus writes: "One of my first acts after my release will be to baptize several dear converts who have been already accepted by the church."

As he conscientiously declined to pay the unjust fine inflicted by the sentence, after the period of his imprisonment had been served out, the authorities sent five Jews to take away his furniture, to pay his fine, the expenses of his imprisonment, and for the services of two watchmen employed to guard the meeting house and prevent it being opened. During his imprisonment, the little church driven from their humble meeting place, instead of quailing before the storm, according to previous arrangement, providing for such contingency, assembled in sixteen different meeting places to worship God and pray for their imprisoned Pastor. The blow intended to crush out the flame, only scattered the embers, to kindle on new material elsewhere.

Great interest and indignation were excited in this country, and in England, by these and similar persecutions, inflicted at various points on the continent against dissenters, and especially against Baptists—and remonstrances and petitions were addressed to the Hamburg Senate, and to the other governments, signed by some of the most distinguished citizens of both countries. They have not been without effect, for though the laws authorizing such barbarities have not been repealed, yet popular sentiment grows strong against them, and they are enforced at longer intervals, and with less and less cruelty.

Mr. Oncken, in answering the many calls for evangelical labors, has travelled extensively over Germany and into the neighbouring countries, entering cities and towns in defiance of the authorities, baptizing converts privately; preaching and administering the Lord's Supper, at midnight, with closed windows and barred doors; chased by the police when they received an intimation of his visit; abused and vilified by the clergy and magis-

trates of the established church; stoned and mobbed by the populace; and yet he has nobly persevered in proclaiming a pure gospel, in baptizing converts, organizing churches, ordaining and stationing ministers, instructing the new churches in matters relating to polity and doctrine, thus exercising the functions of an Apostle; and doing the work of an Evangelist.

When the history of these movements in Germany shall be written—and it will be written—and the world shall see, through how much tribulation and sacrifice these disciples have pressed their way into the kingdom of Christ—with what earnestness and faith in God, they have persevered—with what fines and confiscations they have been harassed and impoverished,—what prolonged and cruel imprisonments, as in the case of the Brothers Minister—at Copenhagen, and many others, how visited at midnight by the police and dragged from their beds, that search might be made for stranger Christians—how compelled to meet in the woods, in the dark night for prayer and mutual exhortation—how banished from their dear homes for their adherence to Christ—we shall be able to present a counterpart, that will awaken surprise by its accuracy, to the history of the primitive Christians, both in the character of the persecutors, in the spirit with which persecutions were endured, and we trust too in the results that follow.

In May, 1842, Mr. Oncken and the church in Hamburg, cheerfully embraced an opportunity for inflicting Christian revenge upon their persecutors. A fearful conflagration that raged for three days destroyed one quarter of the city. The large warehouse rented and occupied by the church stood unscathed amid the ruins. His own dwelling, and those of his associate labourers, Brn. Kobner and Lange, were thrown open to the sufferers, and the first and third stories of their meeting-house were filled with the homeless victims of the conflagration. Their meetings were continued in the second story, and many of these godless men, thus driven as it were to the house of God, heard the messages of salvation, and found their sudden poverty the introduction to everlasting riches.

In May, 1843, Mr. Oncken was a second time thrown into prison, though in very bad health, on the charge of "administering the sacraments" but after four days' confinement, on application being made to the Senate, he was released. Our space will not permit us to dwell on the details of his labors. These, will doubtless, in due time, be given to the world. In the very teeth of hostility and prejudice he has borne the message of truth into all parts of Germany, and great success has attended his labors, and the labors of his associates. These associates include all the members of the churches and not the ministers merely, for in Germany all the disciples are expected to be working Christians. "We have no one in our church," says brother Oncken, speaking of the Hamburg congregation of believers, "that will not work; 'no drones in the hive' is our motto. In this way we grow; 'not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' We believe almost in the infallibility of such a church; not of the minister, or deacons, but of the church." So labour the brethren connected with the German churches. To be a church member is, with them, to be a missionary. These "new-born churches" are, like the churches in apostolic times, fresh in their spiritual life, and full of vigour for their work. The private members, labouring as city and village tract distributors, and as travelling tradesmen (like the Waldenses of old,) "perform a surprising amount of missionary labor; so that the ordained missionaries often find it necessary to follow in their train, for the purpose of baptizing converts and forming

them into churches or branches of churches."

The gospel thus proclaimed in a country where the common people, wearied of the scholastic discussions and dry dissertations which they are accustomed to hear in the establishment, are famishing for the bread of life, and witnessed by the sufferings amid persecution and hardships, of those who preach it; the simple truth as taught in the gospel, has, like a flame driven by the winds, been continually spreading wider and wider, and ever breaking forth at new and unexpected points. The number of converts and churches have greatly increased.

The principles which amid so great persecution were promulgated in Hamburg, have been disseminated in most of the German States, in Denmark, in Holland and in Sweden. Baptist churches have been organized in Hamburg, Berlin, Bremen, Berne, Stuttgart, Vienna and Copenhagen, and in a number of lesser towns and rural districts. The little stream of evangelical truth has been widening and deepening, and promises to become a mighty river—a river of the "water of life." Two efficient and thoroughly educated Lutheran pastors—Messrs. Ribbeck and Ringlesdorff—a Missionary in Hesse—and three State school teachers—beside numerous laymen, have recently united with the Baptist churches.

One of the most cheering indications of progress in the "Cabinet Order" recently issued by the authority of the King of Prussia, in which he declares his desire to resign his position and authority as Head of the National Church, into the hands of "Apostolically formed churches, of small apparent size, in each of which the life, the order and the offices of the universal church of the Lord on earth are brought into activity—independent, self-increasing creations by which, as with living stones, the apostles of the Lord commenced the building of His visible church."

With such right royal sentiments as these, Kings promise to become "nursing fathers" in the church.

During the past year Mr. Oncken has been in the United States, preaching so far as his impaired health would admit and collecting funds for building chapels in Germany.

He has never entirely recovered from the injuries and shock to his nervous system, received in the terrible calamity at Norwalk, Conn., immediately after his arrival in the country, when the train of cars, in which he was passenger, plunged into the river while running at full speed, the draw-bridge being out of its place. The crash, the wreck the mangled forms of the dead, and the severe injuries which he personally endured, produced an effect upon his health, before enfeebled by protracted labors, which still leaves him weak and infirm.

The following Table which has been prepared after a good deal of research, does not purport to give exact statistics, except for some four or five years including the two last. The time of the reckoning is the beginning of each year. The statistics of the churches have not been accurately reported until within the last two or three years. It will give perhaps as correct an idea, as figures can, of the work that has been commenced on the Continent of Europe by this "Apostle of the Germans."

Table showing the progressive statistics of the Baptist Churches of Germany, Denmark and Sweden.

Years.	Churches.	Ministers.	Total Comm'ts.
1836	1	1	13
1837	1	2	42
1838	3	4	76
1839	5	5	121
1840	6	6	179
1841	11	9	235
1842	14	10	350
1843	16	12	620