

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 12, 1854.

NO. 17.

[From the London Patriot.

The Statistics of the Census Relating to Public Worship.

The more carefully the Statistics of the Census relating to Public Worship are examined and analysed, the more replete they will appear to be with matter for serious reflection. One fact, which has attracted special notice from the public Journals, is, the comparatively little use made of churches. Of 14,077 churches in England and Wales, 4,740 (more than a third) are open only once on the Sunday, and only 772 are open for three services. Inadequate endowments, it is remarked, will hardly account for this deficiency, since there are but 1,354 incumbents who have not above £200 a-year. Another important fact is, the large proportion of sittings provided by the Established Church that are unoccupied. Thus, while the Church of England provides an aggregate accommodation of 5,317,915 sittings, and the non-Established Evangelical bodies altogether, 4,182,180, the attendance on the Census Sunday is computed to have been, in the churches and chapels of the Establishment, 3,773,474, and in the places of worship belonging to the Evangelical Nonconformists and Methodists, 3,014,622. The proportion of attendants to sittings is computed to be, on the average, as high as 42 per cent. among the Baptists, and 38 among the Independents, but only 33 in the churches of the Establishment, taking the three services together. This, however, scarcely gives a correct view of the fact, since the attendance on the different services varies so considerably. The number of sittings out of every 100 occupied in the edifices of the Church of England, on the Census Sunday, was, 48 in the morning, 36 in the afternoon, and only 16 in the evening. The number out of every 100 occupied by attendants in the other Protestant places of worship, 40 in the morning, 26 in the afternoon, and 45 in the evening: a fact strikingly exhibiting the different social habits of the members of these religious bodies.

One general conclusion to which an examination of these Statistics leads, is, that, although there is still room and occasion for church and chapel extension, this is far less needed than an extension and multiplication of an effective, varied, and well distributed living agency. Upon this subject, there are some admirable observations in Mr. HORACE MANN'S Report, which well deserve to be carefully pondered by all who are concerned for the religious welfare of the masses in the Metropolis and the large towns, and who, moreover, are unwilling that the Evangelical Dissenting bodies should be deprived of the honour of bearing a prominent part in these efforts. In their exertions to multiply places of worship, the Metropolitan Dissenters, as well as those of Manchester, Bradford, and other large towns, have displayed an enlightened and munificent zeal; and there is reason to believe, that, by a prosecution of these self-rewarding efforts for a few years, by the different Denominations, the real deficiency of church-room will be adequately supplied. But, after all, the great problem is, how to bring under the influence of Christian teaching that large portion of the population who never enter a place of worship of any description, and for whom churches and chapels are multiplied in vain.

The Census has brought to light the extent to which this practical heathenism or infidelity prevails, as the consequence, in no small degree, of the rapid growth and concentration of the population. It may be doubted, however, whether, in proportion to the numbers of the population, the attendants upon public worship are fewer than at any former period. It must be borne in mind, that, at the beginning of the present century, the population of England and Wales was under nine

millions, whereas it is now more than seventeen. Now, when we consider the extent to which the infidelity propagated by PAINE and VOLTAIRE had at that time infected the lower classes, and the profligacy of manners in all classes, which was the theme of lamentation with our divines and moralists; and, when we recollect that, in 1801, the Evangelical Dissenters (Congregationalists and Baptists) of England are computed to have had only 1,566 places of worship; while Dissent, and, in fact, Evangelical religion in every form, had to struggle against the bitterest intolerance; it is hard to believe, that there was more religion in this country fifty years ago, or a larger proportion of persons outwardly observing the ordinances of Christianity, than in the present day. But then, the mass of irreligion, though proportionally larger, was much less appalling in its numerical amount. Thus, if, out of a population of a million, of whom some 400,000 ought to be found attending public worship, only 100,000 were in the practice of attending fifty years ago; and, at present, out of two millions, who ought to furnish 800,000 attendants, 400,000 attend; still, though the attendance is increased from a tenth to a fifth, the non-attendants will be 400,000, instead of 300,000; and thus, an improved state of society will present a larger mass of vice and irreligion to be grappled with.

It would, indeed, be a very dispiriting conclusion to come to, that, notwithstanding the unparalleled extension of the means of religious instruction by Sunday-schools, Bible Societies, Home Missions, the circulation of the Scriptures and cheap religious works, and the astonishing multiplication of places of worship, the people of this country had retrograded in morality or in religious belief. We are confident, that there is no ground whatever for coming to any such conclusion. While we admit, that all the exertions that have been made, and all the varied machinery of our religious institutions, have been insufficient fully to keep pace with the growing requirements of our rapidly increasing population, we see no such indications of failure as should lead us to distrust the efficacy of the instrumentality that has hitherto been relied upon, or to lay the blame of the existing infidelity and neglect of religion at the door of our public instructors. We do not believe, that either the Gospel has lost its power, or the pulpit its adaptation, as God's ordinance, to the purposes of conversion and edification. There is, however, great danger, lest an opinion of this kind should lead to the substituting for the faithful Evangelical testimony, a style of preaching which, in the attempt to captivate the intellect, altogether fails to touch either the conscience of the heart. The notion, that the age requires something more intellectual than the preaching of the Cross, something wiser than God's wisdom, is the great snare into which young preachers are in peril of falling. The Puseyites allege, that the working-classes will not come to church on account of the *peas*. Some Dissenters, with as little reason, impute their alleged alienation from "the chapel," to defects in our system, or to incompetency in our Ministry. The real fact is, that, at no former period were so large a number of the working-classes attendants upon Nonconformist worship. The extensive alienation, the profane neglect of public worship, the disaffection to God's way of salvation, have always been a patent fact and a standing cause for lamentation to our BAXTERS and BUNYANS, our WHITFIELDS and HILLS. In what age of the Church was it otherwise? These evils have seemed to abound more and more, only on account of the rapid increase of our poorer and more neglected population.

One important consideration has been too much overlooked. Undoubtedly, the sanitary state of a district will exert a powerful effect upon its religious aspect. Squalid po-

verty cannot co-exist with religious habits. A certain degree of self-respect seems essentially connected with the practice of regularly attending upon public worship; and this cannot be destroyed, through vice or abject poverty, without inducing an indisposition to mix with fellow-worshippers. Ragged churches may reclaim some;—it is at least a noble and generous effort on behalf of a special class, with a view, not permanently to isolate them from their neighbours, but only to facilitate their attaining a higher grade in the social scale. To be effective, however, they require to be supplied by a kind of talent not very easy to secure; while chapels in low districts, purposely for the poor, have generally proved failures. Uncleanly habits, induced by indolence and vice more than by poverty, with the moral degradation inseparable from them, create the greatest barrier to Sabbath observance on the part of the working classes. The old saying, "Next to Godliness, Cleanliness," has in it a deep truth; and we believe the observation to be quite just, that Sunday will not be a day of piety to any man to whom it is not a day of cleanliness. One of the first signs of the awakening of religious life in an individual of squalid habits, will often be an attention to personal decency. And in cases in which an improvement has been effected, not by direct religious influence, but as the effect of beneficent kindness, a willingness to attend a place of worship will often manifest itself as the immediate spontaneous result.

There is scarcely any depth of physical and moral degradation from which individuals have not been reclaimed by the voice of Christian kindness and the transforming efficacy of the Gospel; and there is no class of society out of which the Evangelical ministry has not gathered converts and penitents in instances sufficiently numerous to vindicate the instrumentality employed from the charge of unsuitableness or unacceptableness to any class or order of society, as such. Men are separated into classes by their vices, more than by their circumstances. In a free country, and where priestcraft cannot hold the masses of the people in the abject bondage of superstition, it is in vain to look for a general observance of religious duties, apart from an improved social and moral condition of the working classes, and as the result of their intelligent convictions. Too many of those who regularly attend public worship, are influenced, no doubt, by custom, example, education, or other motives than the principle of religious obedience; yet, after making all needful allowances for the operation of inferior motives, it is a consoling reflection, that the attendance of the seven millions found in our places of worship on some part or other of the LORD'S-DAY, out of a population of eighteen millions,—an attendance at least for the most part uncompelled,—represents a larger amount of religious principle and personal piety diffused throughout the community at large, than is to be found in any other Nation under Heaven, or than, perhaps, distinguished the British people at any former period of their history.

GENEVA—ITALY.

The religious worship which was interrupted in a village not far from this city some time since, has been again celebrated in the same place, and it is hoped will not again be disturbed. But the Jesuits are repeating the same scenes in Piedmont. The 28th of Jan., at St. Colombano, while the "Evangelists" were observing the Sabbath by religious exercises, a band of fanatics, stimulated by two violent women, surrounded the place of worship, making a great noise and outcry. They insulted the people, and threatened the preacher and assistants in a most violent and indecent manner; but the latter continued tranquilly to pray and read the scriptures, and at

last, wearied with their own fruitless persecution, the mob left the assembly in peace. The following Sunday, the meeting had but just assembled when a fresh troop of rioters rushed into the house, and, with frightful noises and imprecations, drove the assistants out of the assembly. They selected from among the worshippers one man, a Christian from a neighbouring village, upon whom particularly to wreak their vengeance. The men were armed with clubs, and they forced their victim to march in the midst of them, with a troop of ruffianly boys running in front, shouting the most insulting cries their imaginations could suggest. They continued this march to the end of the commune; there the men who made up the savage escort halted and planted a cross which they had brought for this purpose, and pointing to it, they left their victim exclaiming, "If you again pass this cross without kneeling before it, it shall cost you your life." Let us hope that the government of Piedmont, professedly liberal, will learn from the unhappy example of failure in France, that there can be no true freedom where the religion of Rome prevails. One fact, officially announced, would seem sufficient to enlighten the most incredulous as to the practical workings of the Catholic system. In the Island of Sardinia, a dependency of Piedmont, the priests have had undisputed controul for ages; there are swarms of monks and a great many nuns, and a recent census, taken by order of government, reveals the fact that out of 547,112 inhabitants, 522,381 can neither read nor write. Be certain, ye American citizens, that if you once consent to divide the school money, and permit distinct Catholic schools to be started under the supervision of the priesthood, you will in fifty years have made immense strides towards this beautiful state of things; the money once partitioned off to this particular sect, the priests will find another use for it than to devote it to common schools.

DEATH OF L'ABBE DE LAMMENAIS.

France has just lost, in the death of this eminent man, formerly a priest, one of her and the world's greatest thinkers. His was one of those critical minds which, having observed how irreconcilable all progress and all modern views of improvement are with the spirit and views of Jesuitism, fell short of the true life and light, and became skeptical. After the revolution of 1830, he made a powerful effort to reconcile Catholic interests and liberal interests. In a journal, much talked about at the time, "L'Avenir," he advocated the American system of the separation of Church and State. He fancied that in a union of Popery and Democracy the church would become invigorated and revived by its new element, and that Democracy would become Christianized. If Pius IX. had been Pope at the time, perhaps the experiment of Lammenais would have been tried—safe in the power of backing out, if the obstacles in the way seemed too great to encounter; but the timid Gregory XVI. shrank from any change, still more from any experiment of improvement. The journal was proscribed. Lammenais set out for Rome, in hopes to free his journal from this interdict, but the Pope would neither see, nor hear, nor answer him! On his return to France, he found there a Papal bull, declaring liberty of conscience to be an *absurd maxim, a delirium*; liberty of the press a *fatal license*, of which the Church could not have a too great horror. The Abbe discontinued his journal for the sake of peace, but the Pope exacted still more—an absolute mental subjection to his decree. This was too much. After much hesitation, Lammenais accepted the order, but protested that it was a recognition that the Pope was God. But this effort of submission cost him what little faith he had left in Catholicism. The writings which he subsequently publish-