

THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.

"HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS"—Paul.

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GATHERED FLOWERS.

"Who plucked that flower?" the gardener said, walking with his friend he spied with a mutilated head, "who once had bloomed his hope and pride."

"Who plucked that flower?" the mother cries, anguish deep, and dark and wild, "have no more on earth to prize, I took my child, my darling child?"

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to a future existence. It may be in a fish, bird or beast after death, the soul still wandering on through many changes. Hence the Chinese are afraid to kill various animals lest the souls of departed relatives may be in them and the priests on this account refuse animal food and live entirely on vegetables.

Almost every Chinaman, while accepting the moral precepts of the philosophers and believing in demons and wizards, also looks for a land of forgetfulness known as the Nirvana of Buddhism. He is alike Confucianist, Taoist and Buddhist. In some mysterious way he clings to all three beliefs with their many contradictions. The priests claim to have power to change the next state of man and if a sufficient amount of money is given they can transfer an unhappy existence to a more desirable one. They beat cymbals and drums, offer incense and perform many curious ceremonies, after which the luckless being is given a better future. When at length the transmigrations have ended the wearied spirit is said to enter a stupid condition in Nirvana, where there is neither life nor death.

Beside the teaching [already described] the Chinese imagine there is yet more. They maintain that there is a peculiar power pervading the air which affects health, wealth and every social and commercial interest. This they call Feng Shui or Fung Shway, which means wind-water. They suppose it in certain directions bears favorable and in others unfavorable. If from the cold north it is unlucky while from the south all good influences spring. Houses have to be built on certain sites with their angles and faces turned in a given direction or else Fung Shway will send calamity upon the people. The priests have to decide which position best suits it. Frequently after expensive streets and buildings have been laid out the authorities conclude that the bad current has too heavy a sweep at them and everything must be changed.

The Fung Shway if sending out evil influence travels best along straight lines and smooth tracks, and hence railroads and straight streets are a terror to Chinamen. But if there are plenty of twists and right angles the bad Fung Shway cannot turn them. For this reason Chinese towns must have an L in their streets and good curves around dangerous parts. Telegraph wires are very bad as the Fung Shway could travel with immense speed on them and spread famine, cholera and pestilence along their track.

As a consequence the railroad and telegraph are banished from China. If the track could only be zig-zag it would puzzle the Fung Shway spirit to ride on it and if the telegraph wire could be coiled close or bent in sharp angles between the posts it might do; but as western wisdom is unable thus to accommodate itself to Chinese notions the greatest of modern improvements remain shut out of the country.

But there is yet more difficulty. The Chinese use Fung Shway to harass the missionaries. Their courts recognize it and wherever mission houses are situated so as to bring bad luck upon a place they must be torn down and built elsewhere. In Hang Chow a few years since the native authorities ordered the American missionaries to remove their chapel to another site simply because the luck doctors thought Fung Shway required it. Rev. W. Bainbridge tells us that in Fuchow not long since the large buildings of the Church Missionary Society were ordered to be torn down on account of Fung Shway interference with a Chinese temple near by. Thus the wily heathen manage to make void a law which gives foreign Christians permission to dwell in their land.

OUR CHURCH MEETINGS.

Sometimes since in taking up his residence in this city again, the writer attended the prayer and so-called social meetings of the several Baptist churches and was not a little surprised and grieved to notice the slowness of the attendance at all of them, especially as some of them have a church membership up into the hundreds.

At one of these meetings last week the topic for consideration was, "Why is the prayer meeting so thinly attended?" and the brethren were requested to seek an answer. As I cast about for an answer the thought came to me—"Where is the love that in the bonds of a common salvation a fellowship of mind and kindredness of heart, united differing dispositions in one accord? Where is the love that with a master hand blend discordant human nature into one glorious harmony? Where is the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love?" The bond is broken, the oneness is scattered. Christ's Church, whom he has separated unto himself, and washed with his own precious blood has tampered with the things of the flesh. There are weak spots in our Christianity! The earth-stain is on our once spotless garments. We are not careful for heavenly things. The spirit of the world is upon us. This cannot be disputed, many of you have oftentimes lamented it. You have pointed to the unbecoming levity of some, to the theatre-going, novel reading, card parties, dancing, &c., indulged in by many professing Christians.

You have pointed at these things and as you mourned over them you have said, "The church is growing worldly; it is not as in times of old. But, my brethren, much as these evils are to be deplored, the plague spot has a deeper hold than these. You might purify to yourselves a church that had never seen the inside of a theatre, or opened a novel, that had never given utterance to an untimely jest, or who could not tell the difference between the "Jack of Clubs" and the "Ace of hearts," and yet the spirit of the world might be very manifest in its almost every action. The evil stretches much farther than any of these things; and to expect a reform in a church by merely setting a ban on these is only a species of formalism, and does harm by turning attention from the true source of the mischief, which must be sought for far deeper; for to our holy things has the infection spread! In God's house rather than in our houses and social life is the spirit of the world shown most manifestly, most painfully.

Is it not true? Are not our church affairs conducted according to precisely the same prudential maxims that pass current in the business world. Cautious practical men (?) of business rule our churches and predominate at the weekly meetings just as they do in their own shops and places of business. Faith and love the two-fold cord that bound the church together is no longer visible, or if existing at all, the thread is so small as to be scarcely discernable. Is not the spirit of the world among us? Have we not some who think and act as though God had made them of some more valuable material than those around them, and who feel that they may be soiled by the contact, and others who having no desire to annoy these by their too great proximity, are provided by Satan with a plausible excuse for staying away. And these are fellow-servants, members of the democracy of Jesus Christ. He who added dignity to poverty by choosing the poor of the earth as his ambassadors, and who washed his disciples feet, praying that they might even be united in his love.

My brethren, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." The evil alluded to is a radical one, and a specific remedy must be applied. Let each Christian soldier realize his Christian obligations. Let there be a real whole-hearted love to God and zeal for his glory, and that will invigorate them with a life that will embody itself in action. The looking to Jesus must be renewed. Then shall we bear with each other and our lives be more like his.

Hear Him: "Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in Me,—for without Me ye can do nothing."

FRATERS.
St. John, N. B.

LUTHER'S REFORMS.

BY REV. W. W. EVERTS, JR.

Luther's chief reform, out of which his minor reforms sprang, was the restoration of the doctrine of justification by faith to its place in Christian thought and action. This doctrine had all the freshness of a new discovery. It was hailed as the long-desired relief from a never-ending but ever-increasing burden of penance, pilgrimage, and indulgences. It made man free from slavery to a grasping priesthood. It brought him face to face with God, that he might hear for himself the desired pardon. By this doctrine came to the soul immediate assurance and great joy. Life was henceforth filled, not with alarms, but with thanksgiving. Justification by faith was the watchword and strength of Luther, the great contribution he made to church history.

When indulgences were hawked by Tetzel in the neighborhood of Wittenberg, and pardon of sins for money was preached, it is no wonder that the monk said to himself, "I will sometime put a hole in his drum." After seeking in vain the assistance of his superiors in abating this blasphemy, the courageous young man nailed to the cathedral door in the university town his ninety-five theses, condemning the whole practice. He contended against the assumption that at Rome was a treasury of grace accumulated from the merits of Christ and the apostles, the blood of martyrs and the works of supererogation of all the saints, which could be dispensed by the pope to whomsoever he pleased. God alone can grant indulgences, was the answer; and unless he sees fit to remove it we should cheerfully bear the cross through life.

The pope summons the innovator to his feet, sends a cardinal to demand his recantation, then a nuncio to secure his silence, and finally a bull of excommunication. At first Luther speaks with reverence for the Holy Father; but when commanded to recant without reason and condemned without a trial, he is led to his second reform, and appeals from the pope to a council. By this step he denies the supremacy of the pope, and ere long he is led to regard him, not as the head of Christendom, but the tail, the very Anti-christ. The world is startled by his bold attack entitled "The Babylonian Captivity," in which the condition of Christians at that time was compared to that of the Jews in bondage. His indignation aroused at the treatment the truth met with at Rome, was not careful to choose smooth words in finding expression. This was the subject of his great disputation with Eck at Leipzig; and although the town sided with the champion of the pope, Eck's victory was Rome's defeat. Summoned shortly before the

diet of the German Empire at Worms, he appears, and henceforth the Wittenberg agitation becomes a political and historical question. The diet condemns him, because he will not retract unconvinced. He leaves Worms, expecting to receive the emperor's fatal decree as soon as his safety permit expires. In this peril his good friend the elector arranges for his capture and protection in some unknown place. Now the world is more interested in the brave monk on account of his mysterious disappearance and uncertain fate.

During his ten months' retirement in Wartburg Castle, Luther prepares for his third reform. He appeals from pope, council, and diet to the Bible, which he now begins to translate, sending out the New Testament as early as 1522. Though many editions of the Bible had been printed, they were mostly in Latin, and there was none in German. Opposed by the universities, receiving but timid support at best from the learned, Luther now appeals to the people. It was a wise move, and it was the people who induced their rulers to favor him. If this great man had done nothing more, this simple, clear, living translation of the Bible would have assured him immortal fame. He published it when the decrees of papal councils had condemned lay reading of the Scriptures; but by doing it he had made it possible for churches to dispense with councils and men with priests.

It was in keeping with the publication of this, the freeman's manual, that Luther should proclaim in a famous tract the liberty of the Christian. This is his fourth reform, and by it he struck off at a blow the galling fetters of unscriptural customs and usages. A slave to Christ the believer is slave to no other, but free and above all. What more welcome tidings could there be to the common people who were ground between the demands of the Church and the State, as between the upper and the nether millstone. Eagerly they waited his next utterance.

He never spoke more plainly or wisely than when he took Catherine von Bora to be his wife. He gave the weight of his name against enforced celibacy, and a great exodus took place from convents and monasteries. Marriage was no longer to be looked upon as a sinful state, or even as inferior to virginity. Mother and home was raised to the highest honor, and that which the papist painted as the reformer's blackest sin became his crowning glory.

A PAGE IN MODERN ROMAN HISTORY.

BY REV. W. C. VANMETER.

From the day the Apostle Paul entered Rome, Italy has been God's great battlefield. From Piedmont to Calabria the land has been baptized by the blood of the martyrs. For centuries the Waldensians endured all the tortures that human ingenuity could invent, and unrestrained, heartless power could inflict, and had not God often concealed them in the hiding places he had scooped out in the mountains for them, the last one would have perished.

For a thousand years the Pope in his scarlet robe and triple crown, sat upon his throne in the Seven-hilled city and "made the nations drunk with the blood of the saints." During this long and terrible "night of centuries," the agonizing cry of our brethren was "How long, O Lord, how long?" In 1869 the Pope called to Rome about a thousand of the most distinguished leaders of his hosts. In December of the same year this "Council of War"—the Ecumenical Council—met. Then commenced a series of events that changed the political and moral condition of Europe.

The temporal power of the Pope was doomed, when on the 13th of July, 1870, the dogma of Papal Infallibility was decreed, and its destruction was made sure by the letter written on the same day by Napoleon to Cardinal Antonelli, the Pope's Secretary of State, informing him that he had decided to withdraw the French troops from Rome. Two days after this, at the hour the Pope received his message, which was to him as "the hand-writing upon the wall," Napoleon declared war against Prussia, and thus doomed his own Empire to destruction.

On the 18th, on the shoulders of some of his "mighty men," and under a gaudy canopy of peacock feathers, Pio Nono was borne into the presence of a great multitude, who prostrated themselves before him as if he were a god. He arose and solemnly proclaimed himself the infallible representative of God, then retired, and these abject ones saw him no more until they kissed his dead foot—the foot that had crushed out religious freedom in Rome.

Eight days after this (July 25th) Napoleon had pushed by the Prussians, ordered the immediate withdrawal of his troops from Rome; and in six days (August 1st,) the last soldier had passed out of the Porto del Popolo, thus knocking the last prop from under the Papal throne!

As the French troops left, the Italians rose as one man and declared that the Temporal power of Pope should cease, and Rome henceforth be the capital of United Italy. Their enthusiasm knew no bounds, and their march to Rome commenced. On the 2nd of September Napoleon, with his grand army, was defeated at Sedan, and the Imperial Standard was in the dust. Two days after this (Sept. 4th) the officers gave up their swords—the soldiers laid down their arms—the Republic was decreed—the Empire was annihilated and the Empress escaped from Paris and the Emperor was in exile.

September 12 the Italian army entered the Papal States, and on the 19th their tents whitened the Campagna—their batteries were put in position before Porta Pia, and the Pope was ordered to open the gate, which of course he refused to do. But God had a key that would unlock it. At five o'clock the next morning the key turned—the big guns opened, and after five hours the wall fell, and with it fell the Temporal power of the Pope, and with that fall came deliverance from despotism—Victor Emmanuel entered the city in triumph and proclaimed civil and religious liberty to all the inhabitants of the land!

October 1 the people were called upon to choose a ruler for themselves. In the Papal States 1,501 voted for the Pope and 133,681 for Victor Emmanuel. In Rome 46 voted for the Pope and 40,783 for the King. Thus in seventy-nine days from the decree of Infallibility of the Pope, his Temporal power was overthrown—the French Empire was destroyed, and the Emperor in exile—Rome had become the capital of United Italy, and our brethren were free! No wonder the poor old man, as he walked the floor, wrung his hands and cried, "Alas! alas! I am abandoned by my children!"

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He that is good will infallibly become better, and he that is bad will as certainly become worse; for vice, virtue, and time are three things that never stand still.—Colton.