

THE RELIGIOUS CONDITION IN GERMANY.

No. 1.

A Canadian friend wrote me the other day,—“It seems as if Germany were again going to take the lead in Reformation.” True enough we can learn much from Germany, but a dweller here, who knows both countries, must say—Would that German Christians would learn more from their English-speaking brethren. It is true the government here took a stern position a year ago this month against the excesses of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, and they have sternly carried out the resolutions then made. They are now making stern supplements to these resolutions. But the resolutions were to prevent disobedience of subjects, even of R. C. Bishops, to the civil government, when that government forbade the bishops to injure the character of Roman Catholics who would not teach papal infallibility. This is a grand thing. Hurra for it! But we must not confound such action with a Reformation such as that in the time of Luther, when preachers had their mouths and hearts loosed, and began to proclaim free forgiveness to the trusting repentant. And multitudes opened the doors of their ears and hearts then to hear, for whole regions denied allegiance to the old false preaching, and joined the party of the true. There is now rather a reform in the political affairs. Such may be connected with changes in the spiritual condition of the people. Great changes in the latter are taking place too. We in America notice these less than the political changes. And yet let every true Christian heart pray that in the German hearts there be great changes toward the good, for here as with us there is great need of it. I will try and tell you of some gentle currents in that direction, but first let me give a sketch of the present state of things.

And here, first, of the state of men's hearts as we see this in practices. Let me premise to other remarks this one, that there is a band of devoted servants of the Master here as with us, that holy “rest” or remainder which Isaiah knew would be found in Israel, if all the evil doers were to be cut off. That holy, devoted number here, is of great worth too, as Americans learnt by the sight of some at the Alliance Meeting last fall.

But the mass are careless, pleasure-seeking, seeking gratification of self. So are our masses at home. This sin takes on different forms in different countries. Take church attendance for an example to show the state here. In this city of perhaps 40 to 55 thousand inhabitants there is church accommodation for say 7,000 people (only!) In the largest churches, which might hold 1,000 each, perhaps, I have scarcely ever seen more than 600 or 700, and this on the very special occasions. Usually the number is small even at morning sermon. Late in the day there is but a sprinkling. Now, I have heard it said by good judges in such religious observances, Halle stands much better than the average of cities. I am not altogether ignorant of other places. In Magdeburg the attendances I have seen were small. In the great cathedral, the favourite building, which might hold 5 or 6 thousand, certainly 1,000 would be a large attendance. In another church, large enough for say 1,500, were not 100. Remembering that for that great city of 120,000 people there are some 20 churches of all kinds, an average attendance of even 500 in each would give a small proportion of the whole as church-goers. But such an average attendance would be unusual I am sure. At a service I attended in the Cathedral in Berlin the attendance was small.

But what of small places? One expects the country to be better. Well, I spent a Sabbath a few weeks ago in the middle of the Harz Mountains, in a little town of say 3 to 4 thousand. In the only church in the place, not to reckon a chapel in the castle of the Count, there were at morning service not 200, and in the afternoon scarce 50. They say Leipzig has better church attendance than many places. On a Sabbath spent last summer in a small town near Nurem-