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Rise of Methodism in France.

The readers of the Christian Advocate have frequently had their attention directed to the numerous illustrations of the providence and the grace of God which are furnished by the rise and progress of Methodism in both hemispheres. A page or two of that history relate to France, and they are not unworthy of the rest. Our first introduction to this important field of labour ought not to be buried in oblivion. It was, it is said, in 1790: just at the time when the mine laid by the French encyclopedists had exploded, and a volcano of impiety and misrule had begun to pour out its destructive torrents on the continent of Europe. Then, "when the enemy" was indeed coming in like a flood, "the Spirit of the Lord" lifted up "a standard against him."

It was indeed "a day of small things," of weak things of the world, which God had chosen to confound the mighty, of things of naught in human estimation. John Angel, a Guernsey Methodist, had some business to transact in France, and being at a village called Courceuil, in Normandy, on the Lord's day, found out a little company of Protestants, without a pastor, who assembled in the morning to hear prayers, and a sermon read by one of their elders. A meeting was announced for the afternoon, to which he went, but only a few women were present, who, seeing a stranger there, requested him to read the Bible and the prayers for them. He refused at first, but at last consented. He read the fourth chapter of the Gospel of St. John. His heart was warmed by his reading, and by the attention and earnestness of the poor females who were thus assembled, and, in illustration of our Lord's discourse with the woman of Samaria, and its results, he related his own experience of the grace of God in his conversion, and the circumstances of his religious life. When he had done, a woman present said, "Well, for forty years I have been persecuted for my religion, but I never knew till now what religion really is!" He inquired whether they would receive a preacher, if one were sent to them, and they answered that they would, with great thankfulness. In consequence of these circumstances, France appears on the minutes of conference for 1791.

William Mahy, who was the first preacher appointed, was received as an angel of God: many persons were awakened and converted to God under his ministry in Normandy, in the villages of Courceuil, Cressenon, Beuville, and Periers. He soon extended his labours to Conde on Noireau, a town about thirty-five or forty miles from Beuville where he resided. He visited in the neighbourhood of Conde the Protestants Saint Honorine, Athis, Montilly, Pertilly, Frene, Clefene, and Mont Thabor, and in all these places much good was done, of which the fruit remains to this day. Many years since a Protestant of that neighbourhood was speaking of some orphans to the clergyman of his village, who, in the presence of your correspondent, expressed his apprehensions, that, as some of their relations were Catholics, the religious instruction of these children might be neglected, or perverted. To this it was immediately replied, "O, you have nothing to fear on that score, for their 'bonne' (their nurse) is one of the pious women of Periers!"

Mr. Mahy was indefatigable in his travels and labours, and when many of the priests of the country had perished on the scaffold, or emigrated, his labours were welcomed by an increasing number of persons who attended on his ministry, and testified their approbation of his doctrine.

Unfortunately, he was seized soon after by the most distressing, perhaps, of human diseases. His reason was affected. This has been attributed to the vexatious conduct of the enemies of the truth, and to his being separated from his Christian friends at Guernsey, with whom the war between France and England effectually hindered his intercourse. With great difficulty, however, he at last obtained permission to return to Guernsey, from the French Emperor. His friends sent him to England, to an asylum where his disorder could be attended to, and he died in 1812, near Manchester, his last words being, "All my trust is in the mercy of God."

It was undoubtedly a mysterious providence by which Wm. Mahy was withdrawn from labours by which God was glorified in so high a measure, and which were so useful to the people among whom he laboured. The Lord of the harvest, however, was preparing another messenger of good tidings, in answer to the prayers of the little flock in Normandy. Among the numerous emigrants who sought a shelter in England from the horrors of the French revolution was a member of a distinguished family of Brittany, Pierre de Pontavire. He had reached the island of Jersey, and while there, as a teacher of the French language, he made the acquaintance of the Rev. Richard Reeve, (whom you have had in the United States, as one of a deputation from the British Conference,) as well as of other Methodist preachers who were stationed in that island. This led to his being awakened to a sense of his danger and misery. He afterwards travelled with Dr. Coke, at his invitation, and with him visited Sheffield, where, in a revival of religion, while the Rev. William Brewster and others were exhorting on

God in his behalf, he entered into "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Having experienced the mercy of God, he began to show that mercy to others. His call to the ministry was examined and approved of; and after having laboured some time with great acceptance and much fruit in Guernsey and Jersey, he returned in 1802 to his native land.

This measure was not unaccompanied by danger. The laws against emigrants were very severe. According to them he might have been at once conducted to execution, on the mere establishment of his identity; but his zeal for God's glory, and the salvation of his fellow countrymen, rose above this obstacle. He visited his family, who earnestly desired to retain him with them, but after a short stay he hastened to visit the villages of Normandy, in which he was received as an angel from heaven, and was made an instrument of extending the work of God by the conversion of sinners, and, more especially, of deepening that work in the hearts of those who had believed through grace. Lace-making is the principal employment of most of the females of Beuville and Periers. In their poverty they congregate in stables during the winter, the heat of the animals supplying that of fuel, which is too expensive, and enabling them thus to "shuffle their cords about the live-long day." To these stables M. de Pontavire used to resort, and read to them while they worked, translating the best religious writings of that day, such as Fletcher's and Wesley's Works, into French as he read, or relating to them interesting anecdotes concerning the work of God. The inhabitants of Periers still love to relate how perseveringly and affectionately he laboured among them, and what a pure and ardent Christian friendship they felt for each other, while the depth of their piety, and the extent of their spiritual and experimental knowledge, testifies, in the few that remain, to the riches of the Gospel blessings that were thus communicated.

There was, at that time, a great scarcity of Protestant pastors in France, and M. de Pontavire was solicited to take the spiritual charge of one of the vacant Churches: at the same time he was opposed by some of the Protestants of Conde on Noireau, in consequence of his not being a minister of the Reformed Church. After having well considered the circumstances, he applied to M. Rabant, at Paris, who, with his colleagues, Mess. Arceat and Marron, replied favourably to his request. A call was addressed to him from some Churches in what is called the "Pays de Caux," and in them he exercised his ministry to the day of his death, and thus the heaven was placed in another measure of meal, in which it has since spread and extended itself greatly. An eminent evangelical minister, who is now the President of the Consistory of the Reformed Church in one of the largest cities in France, acknowledged to the writer, that he owes his conversion to God to M. de Pontavire's labours in the "Pays de Caux."

Though thus separated by the providence and the grace of God, as he believed, from the Methodist societies of the neighbourhood of Caux, he endeavoured to supply the void occasioned by his removal by his epistolary correspondence, which was very useful to them for many years after his death, and while they were without a preacher in consequence of the war between France and England. With the same view, he visited them as frequently as the duties of his new station permitted; and when, after two years hard labour, he fell into a decline, he was removed to Beuville, "to die," as he said, "among my beloved friends." The heavenly influence which filled his soul, in his last illness, with purity and joy, was so great that he did not willingly suffer any converse in his presence that was foreign to the interests of the country to which he was about "to take his last triumphant flight."

He died in December, 1810, forty years of age only. His memory is enshrined in the hearts of his spiritual children and his friends. How superior in the eyes of the Supreme Being, and of holy angels, are the fruits of labours and sufferings like his, to the results, even when they are good, which is rarely the case, of the skill and labours of the men whom the world calls great.

Paris Correspondent of the N. Y. Adv. & Journal.

State of Religion in the United States.

The present state of religion in our country should alarm and arouse all good men. We have lately referred to the declension of the public morals; along with and chief cause of this wide spread evil there has unquestionably been an universal decay of piety. The Holy Spirit has not universally withdrawn his gracious influence: revivals are occasionally reported, but they are seldom, and seem not to be extensive or profound. These general and powerful religious impressions which have marked the history of the country all along for more than half a century, seem to have ceased during several late years. They were attended, unquestionably, by some individual revivals, but who will deny that they were glorious visitations of God, however marked by human imperfection; and who even is

not convinced that those once frequently recurring and almost universal seasons of religious interest have chiefly contributed to the strength, numerical and moral, of the American church?

Nevertheless, it is to be feared that many among us look with distrust on the memories of those better times. Let us beware how we grieve the Holy Spirit of God by our worldly-wise speculations. God's operations are perfect, but they have to do with imperfect subjects, and are affected by the infirmities of imperfect agents. The true evangelical philosopher can never lose sight of this fact in considering the history of spiritual religion in the world, and the Christian pastor who, rather than incur the incidental imperfection referred to, would sacrifice the wide spread advantages of those seasons of deep religious interest which wake up the multitudes to call upon God, and would prefer to conduct his charge with the scarcely appreciable progress of a quiet, unawakened parish life, mistakes woefully, we think, the urgency of his divine call and the exigency of souls. He will certainly not find his justification in the ministry of the prophets of Christ, of the apostles, or of those latter great "workmen," Luther, Edwards, Wesley, &c., under whose powerful labours persecution and fanaticism have raged, but who have, nevertheless, called forth thousands unto the resurrection of spiritual life.

Let us, then, not lose our confidence in "revivals." Let us avoid their usual defects as much as possible, but hail them with grateful welcome as the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. How many of us now reading these lines, owe all our spiritual hopes to them? How few of us have reason to believe that any of the usual monotonous means of those formal churches which object to such seasons, would have reached us in our reckless course? How many of us emerged into the light of the "excellent glory" amidst the mockery of scornful or the confusion of weak and erring men, as we expect to arise in the last glorious day, amidst the blasphemies of the lost and the confusion of dissolving worlds!

The spiritual necessities of the times not only demand a return of these special influences of the Spirit, but we think somewhat favourable circumstances exist at present to encourage us to labour and pray for them.

We repeat, not only do the necessities, but also many favourable circumstances of the times, call upon all evangelical labourers to be up and at work, looking for and hastening unto better days. Behold the fields are already white unto the harvest. Thrust in the sickle then, and gather the sheaves into the garner. Let especially our numerous feeble churches, recently planted, seek to reinforce their strength, and save the things which are ready to perish, by labouring for a profound work of grace in their midst, and let us all place this object before us as the great idea of the times—the express aim of our preaching, praying and living. According to our faith shall it be unto us.—Zion's Herald.

Methodism in Montreal.

The Wesleyans in Montreal have three fine churches. An esteemed brother, who has been a few weeks in the sister city, informs us that the congregations are pretty good. The removals from Montreal no doubt have materially affected the congregations. One of the churches is situated in Griffin Town, another in Quebec suburbs, and the principal one in St. James street. This last is, we presume, the finest Wesleyan church in British North America. Referring to these edifices, every way creditable to our friends in Montreal and to Methodism in Canada, our correspondent says, "These churches were erected under the auspices of our worthy and deservedly esteemed President, Dr. Richey; and it is very pleasing for me to be able to state, that no minister commands the love and esteem of the Protestant community here more than does the honoured individual now at the head of our ecclesiastical affairs, in Western Canada.—Christian Guardian.

Sinful Amusements.

The Conference in its late Pastoral Address affectionately urged upon the members of the Wesleyan Church in Canada the necessity of abstaining from all amusements calculated to lead the heart from God. The subject is one of vast importance. In every part of America there is a danger to be apprehended from a compromise with the world in this matter. Many have lost their confidence and peace by indulging in improper amusements. Such an indulgence has been the spiritual ruin of hundreds and hundreds more are in jeopardy. Fully alive to this all the Bishops of the M. E. Church at a general meeting in New-York unanimously adopted the following, and pledged themselves to read or communicate the substance of the document to each of the several Conferences throughout the work:

"Information received from reliable sources has occasioned us to entertain serious fears that there is an increasing tendency among some brethren and sisters in the Church, and in vari-