

PROTESTANT FRANCE.

WOULD that France were Protestant! is the prayer which arises to the lips of every well-wisher of the country. But how far is this from being the case! So far from actively protesting against the errors of Rome or any other errors, there is rather danger of her sinking deeply into a condition of indifference and infidelity. France is undergoing a revolution greater than that she passed through at the close of her war with Germany. She is so far on the way to Protestantism that she begins to see through the errors of Romanism, and she can detect the juggling tricks of priests and Jesuits. Romanism in France is a very different thing from what it is in Spain or in the United States. In Spain it has sufficient vitality to overawe the minds of the masses, if not to command their faith and respect. Romanism is still priestcraft without any adaptation of itself to the altered circumstances of the times in which we live. In the United States, on the other hand, Romanism has thrown off some of her old garments, and has assumed somewhat of a new dress in keeping with the age. The priests in the States are gentlemanly in their appearance. They play the card of patronizing Protestants, or at all events they try to hide the distinctive principles of their system by conforming as far as possible to the general customs and manners. But in France sacerdotalism tries to preserve its ancient form without any attachment of the people to her principles or without their faith in her teachings. Religion in such circumstances becomes a mere masquerade. It is in danger of becoming nothing more than a hollow sham. The best possible condition is presented for the triumphant success of infidelity.

But infidelity is a thing of which men grow weary. Once it has expended the force of its waves upon the shores and rocks of truth, there is nothing left behind. We may be almost confident in predicting that at the very moment infidelity waxes strongest, then a reaction has begun. Just as with the fever-stricken for whom there is in reserve restoration to health, there is a moment that is little short of death, but the next moment is that of the returning ebb of the wave of life. From that period onwards there is the increase of vigor. So it is with infidelity. It seems to triumph, but its success is its death. The next moment the patient begins to breathe; and the reaction brings with it the promise of the progress of religion, and the triumph of its principles. So it is in France at this moment. The nation is sick at heart. She sees that Romanism is not Christianity, but that there is a something called Christianity without which she cannot live. She has had enough of Sabbath-breaking. She would to-day reverse the decree of the revolution, commanding one day in ten to be observed as a resting period, and would, we verily believe, adopt the law of the Christian Sabbath. Voltaire is not, in the estimation of the French of to-day the demigod he was when enjoying the hospitalities of Frederick, or when welcomed like some great warrior returning from the field of triumph by the inhabitants of Paris, intoxicated with voluptuous pride and worldly pomp and vanity. The French people see through all that now.

They at all events see through all the hollowness and sham. They begin to feel there is truth somewhere. They desire to touch bottom if they can. Their trials have done much to cure them of their love of spectacular show. They are no longer contented with the glitter of military parade. They feel there must be something which this parade represents. The nation is sighing for the patriotic spirit, for something manly, for that which will prove to be truly national. And she begins to feel that religion is the one thing necessary to secure such an end.

It is most promising to find that the forces of Protestantism are preparing for the work that is before them. The true religion must take up the task, and not leave France to perish in her intellectual and religious crisis. And it is well to know that there is fair prospect of this work being done, and done well. In France Romanism has not to be confronted with innumerable sects calling themselves Protestant. That has been tried in other countries, and has of course failed. It was the ruin of our foreign missions that not the Protestant Church, but sects of the Protestant name, went forth to fight error and sin. But they had first to fight their own prejudices and bigotry. It was a failure, and could prove nothing else. There is some prospect now-a-days for foreign missions, from sects, uniting in one in their great and common cause. Supposing such a thing were possible, to have the Church of England, and the various other denominations in that country, the churches of Scotland, those of Ireland, and the American churches working each for its own ends in fair France, it would give a new lease of existence to Romanism and infidelity. Fortunately for France, she has a Reformed Church of her own, which without being nominally and distinctively Presbyterian, or Episcopalian, or Independent, has in her the spirit of eclecticism, which gathers all her good things from a variety of sources; so that in that country there are the two systems existing in open antagonism, Romanism and the Reformed Church.

We cannot but hope for a quiet aggressiveness of the true religion. The truth must prevail. It must have free course and be glorified. A crystalizing process is going on which will lead to the formation of a national anti-Romanist Church. Such a Church will prove itself in harmony with the free institutions of France and with the spirit of the Republic. The days of persecution have passed away forever. A second edict of Nantz is no longer possible. Even with a monarchy we believe this to be the case; much less so, therefore, with such a Republic as France is becoming. The Reformed Church in France seems also to be alive to her responsibilities and to be doing her duty. She is working from many points. The missionary efforts of Rev. Mr. McAll and others in Paris have been followed by astonishing results. The religious meetings held in connection with the Exposition have not been without their influence. The vocal and instrumental music, which has gathered together the listening throngs, and this very much of a religious kind, has been acting upon the excitable natures of Frenchmen for their good.

Think of France becoming truly Protestant,

not in name, but in spirit! She is already great in agricultural wealth, in inventive ability, in literary genius, in the arts and in science. She would become great in morality, in a lofty tone, in true manliness, in patriotism, in the missionary spirit. Softened and saddened it may be by means of the fiery ordeal through which she had to pass, a new France will rise upon the ashes of the old, and we doubt not that she will soon take a first place among the Protestant nations of the world.

THE DEATH OF MRS. PRENTISS.

THE recent death of this well-known and popular writer of children's books creates a blank in the literary circle which it will be difficult to fill. She is principally known as the authoress of the delightful book, "Stepping Heavenward." This is a standard of its kind, and has reached its tens of thousands of copies. Her books for children have commanded a large circulation, and have proved a specialty for Sunday School libraries. They will retain their place, and in this way she who is dead will yet speak words of comfort and instruction. As the wife of the Rev. Dr. Prentiss, one of the professors of the New York Union Theological Seminary, as one who in her church connection led a useful and active life, and as a lady who was a particular bright and shining light in the cultivated society in which she moved, she will be very much missed. The many friends of Dr. Prentiss will sympathize deeply with him in his great and irreparable bereavement. The comfort in such a trial is the conviction which our blessed Gospel imparts that the spirit of the departed is with the happy throng in heaven, and gazing upon those sights of wonder the mere emblems of which occupy so much of our thoughts in this life.

MR. SPURGEON, of London, has again been invited to lecture in the United States, and again writes that he "never had the slightest idea of visiting America."

THE China Mission of the Church of Scotland has been established at Ichang, a town several hundred miles up the river from Hankau. At the head of the mission is the Rev. George Cockburn, who is assisted by two married colporteurs. Little will be done until the members of the mission learn the language.

MEETINGS OF PRESBYTERY.

BRUCE.—In Knox Church, Kincardine, on last Tuesday of September, at 2.30 p.m.

HURON.—Presbytery of Huron will meet at Wingham, on 2nd Tuesday of October, at 11 a.m.

PETERBORO'.—At Cobourg, on the last Tuesday of September, at 11 o'clock a.m.

CHATHAM.—The Presbytery of Chatham meets at Thamesville on Tuesday, the 17th Sept., at 1 o'clock p.m.

PARIS.—Presbytery of Paris meets in Zion Church, Brantford, on Tuesday, 17th September, at 2 p.m.

KINGSTON.—Next quarterly meeting of this Presbytery will be held in St. Andrew's Hall, Kingston, on Tuesday, 24th September, at 3 p.m.

OTTAWA.—In Bank street Church, Ottawa, on the first Tuesday of November.

STRATFORD.—In Knox Church, Stratford, on 24th September, at 9.30 a.m.

LONDON.—Next regular meeting in St. Andrew's, Sarnia, on last Tuesday in September, at 7 p.m.

BARRIE.—At Barrie, on Tuesday, 24th Sept., at 11 a.m.

SAUGEEN.—At Palmerston, on Tuesday, 17th September, at 2 o'clock p.m.

HAMILTON.—Next ordinary meeting in Central Church, Hamilton, on Tuesday, Sept 17th, at 11 o'clock a.m.

MONTREAL.—In St Paul's, Montreal, on Tuesday, the 1st of Oct., at 11 a.m.

GLENGARRY.—At St Andrew's Church, Martintown, on Tuesday, Sept 17th, at 1 o'clock p.m.

LINDSAY.—At Lindsay, on the last Tuesday of November.

LANARK AND RENFREW.—In St. Andrew's Church, Carleton Place, on November 19th, at 1 p.m.

OWEN SOUND.—In Knox Church, Owen Sound, on Tuesday, Sept. 17th, at 10 a.m.

QUEBEC.—In Melbourne, on Wednesday, 16th October, at 10 a.m.