

I SHALL NEVER, NEVER GIVE UP THE BIBLE.

Who live in this happy land of light and liberty, where the sun of the Reformation has in a large measure dispelled the mists of ignorance and superstition, can have little idea of the hardships to which certain readers of the Scriptures are exposed in foreign lands. As a rule, the priests of the Romish Church are the principal hindrance to a free circulation of the Word, although exceptions are found of men, even of this class, who are anxious for their people to become versed in the oracles of God.

From the Christian standpoint, Austria is one of the darkest parts of the earth, and this could be curiously illustrated by the adventures of those who endeavour to circulate the Bible and Christian literature in the land. About eight or nine years ago, a colporteur worked during several days in a certain parish in Lemberg, but on Sunday he was somewhat taken aback when notice was given in the parish church that people were not to buy the stranger's books, and that those who had purchased were to give them up at once, in order that they might be burned. Unhappily, many of the superstitious people were weak enough to comply. They gave up what might have been to them the bread of life, and allowed their opportunity to pass.

Others were not disposed to yield; and one man, a mason, showed a bold front which, under the circumstances, was thought to be very remarkable. He absolutely refused to yield to any pressure which could be brought to bear upon him.

"You have bought a Bible; you are to bring it to me at once," said the priest.

"If your reverence wishes to have one I will with pleasure go and buy one for you at the colporteur's," answered the mason.

"No, I do not wish to buy one; the book is false," cried the other. "I forbid you for your soul's sake to read it! I command you to bring it hither."

But the poor artisan, who had been captivated by the words of eternal life, was more than able to hold his own. "I have now been reading the book for several days; I have taken a fancy to it," he said. "Really it contains nothing that can do my soul any harm; much more, it contains words such as I have never heard before, and can never forget." He then quoted certain texts which he had learned; and this alleged pretence "to know the Bible by heart" incensed the priest more than ever.

"I would wish to know it," the workman still replied, however; "and to cut the matter short," he added, in a calm but determined manner, "I shall never, never give up the Bible."

That was a grand resolve for a man amid such surroundings to make; but he not only kept it as regarded himself, he even stood by the Bible-stall on market-days and encouraged passers-by to purchase. Surely, from such an example, the poor of other countries ought to learn to value more and more the words of eternal life.



THE PRINCESS' CASKET.

AN ARABIAN STORY.



ROYAL young Araby's daughter,
A princess both gentle and fair,
Received from the wise one who taught her,
A casket of ivory rare—

A casket of carving most clever,
A dainty delight to the eye,
But, "Open it not," said the giver,
"Until a whole year has passed by."

How oft with the casket before her
The princess would touch the closed lid,
And wonder, like little Pandora,
What treasures beneath it lay hid.

But time still moves on, though it lingers;
The long year of waiting is past;
With trembling of fair slender fingers
The casket is opened at last.

Alas! for the treasure long cherished
Behold but a small shroud of rust,
A something whose beauty has perished
As flowers go back to the dust.

Beneath, on the smooth satin lining,
A small slip of parchment appears;
The princess, perplexed and repining,
Unfolds it and reads through her tears:

"This trinket, when herein I placed it,
Bore one little rust-spot alone;
But time and neglect have defaced it
Till now all its beauty is gone.

"Learn, princess, how one fault or failing
May injure a character fair,
And virtue be all unavailing
If one little 'rust-spot' be there.

"Place here in your casket a treasure,
A jewel of untarnished gold;
Your eyes may behold it with pleasure
Still beautiful when you are old.

"And you—with my heart's prayer I ask it—
Oh, keep yourself spotless from sin;
Your body the beautiful casket,
Your soul the pure treasure within."

E. S. Carter.