

Religious Intelligence.

(From a Correspondent of the WATCHMAN.)

The Present State of Switzerland.

Lausanne, Switzerland, 9th Sept., 1850.

The European storms of 1848 '49, seem partly spent, and we are now becalmed! Whether it will be merely a lull before the coming tempest, of course the Omniscient only knows. A somewhat attentive examination of the state of Society on the Continent leads one, however, to suspect that there is in the future much more ground for fear than for hope. At present, our quiet is only interrupted on the one hand by the roar of the Danish canon, and on the other hand by the now seditious French cry of "Vive la Republique." But who can tell what a day may bring forth; and what important events are preparing over the ground lying between the Baltic and the Seine? . . . The Christian's duty, while watching passing events, is "to pray everywhere," as the Apostle has it, "lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

"Whatever ills the world befall,  
A pledge of endless good we call;  
A sign of Jesus near:  
His chariot will not long delay;  
We hear the rambling wheels, and pray  
Triumphant Lord appear!"

The object of this paper, however, is not to descant on affairs generally, but specially to give a brief outline of the present condition of Switzerland.

The state of things with us is not at present alarming; perhaps the contrary. The claims of Prussia on Neuchatel are left in abeyance,—the question of the refugees seems quieted,—and the international or Cantonal interests are mostly at rest. The only facts worth recording pertain to the Cantons of Fribourg, Geneva, and Berne.

The Canton of Fribourg is in a truly lamentable condition. Prior to 1845, its masters were Jesuits; since then, the extreme or ultra-radicals have been in power. You may easily imagine the state of a people alternately under the dominion of superstition and impiety. Education, morality, true liberty, finances, trade, agriculture, all is in a state of suffering.

Geneva is at present gradually undergoing a transformation of a novel description.—She has had her political and her religious revolutions, and now begins an attempt at a physical transformation. I allude to the demolition of her ramparts by order of the local government. This may appear at first sight an unimportant fact; but in times like the present, and under existing circumstances, it tells its tale. Desirous of knowing whether the opinion of others coincided with my own on this subject, I enquired of a friend, well able from his position in society to speak on the question, what he thought was the real object of Government, or it abettors, in this affair. He replied, "One of the principal objects is, I believe, to efface amongst us, as far as possible, one last remaining trace of the Reformation.—They have done away with the Confessions of Faith of our fathers; with our conservative institutions; and now, in order to obliterate a remaining trace of what Geneva was, they remove her ramparts! Ancient Geneva, the Geneva of the Reformation must be transformed at any cost, and under any pretext; so that even the walls behind which Protestants found refuge in former days, and within which the lamp of truth shone so brightly, must disappear. The recollections they bring to mind are annoying; so say the united councils of Popery and Socialism." Another coincidence connected with this subject is worthy of remark. It is this. The first pickaxes, that were lifted up against the ramparts, and the first shovelfuls of earth that were removed, was the work of the Catholic peasants of the neighbourhood! Surely herein is a sign; here, as elsewhere, Infidelity and Popery join in the cry; "Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof." I am informed that Dr. Gutzlaff refused to pay a passing visit to the old and venerated city, stating as a reason: "I have heard in China that Geneva is becoming Papist; what would I do there?" There is some truth as well as some exaggeration in this remark, as I may have occasion to show at some future opportunity. May the Lord arise and plead his own cause!

But the most important fact that has occurred of late in Switzerland, is the restoration of a Conservative-Liberal Government in the Canton of Berne, and, consequently, the fall of the ultra-Radicals of 1846. This occurrence has acted as ballast in our political vessel, throughout the Confederation: it has certainly steadied us. The meeting held at Munsingen, on the 25th of March, preparatory to the elections, was a noble one. More than 12,000 men met to deliberate on the critical situation of their country, and to prepare for the disposing of their votes in furtherance of its best interests. Unless one were present, no correct idea can well be formed of the thrilling effect produced by the singing of the popular melody, which formed an introduction to the business of the day. It was the "Ruffst mein Vaterland."—(At thy call, my fatherland, &c.) Of the speeches delivered, perhaps the most telling was that of Herr John Shnell, an old friend of order and of his country:—it describes so well the influences under which the people met that day. He spoke as follows:—"Beloved countrymen, —Let me address a few serious words to you. A principle to which I hold as fundamental, is Christianity. I believe in the doctrines of Christianity,—in the Divine Revelation called the Gospel. I place it near my heart as my chief good. But what has been passing in our country in this respect? Have not attempts been made to substitute some miserable human theories for these eternal truths? It would hardly have been thought possible to govern a professedly Christian country without Christian principles, for one single twelvemonth; but, alas! it has been even so among us during four long years! (Tremendous applause.) . . . Believe me, Bernese, without Christianity there is no true prosperity; banish Christianity and you prescribe true liberty! . . . May the Lord have you and our country under his holy keeping." Thus spoke the Christian patriot. He alluded, as you perceive, to the encouragement held out by men then in power, to the propaganda of infidels and socialists. I last year presented your readers with a few samples of their proceedings. A few weeks after the meeting of Munsingen, a loyal people had elected a new government, whose first public acts tended to the encouragement of piety and good morals.

These and other manifestations of improvement do not, of course, please our Socialist-Radicals, either at Berne or elsewhere. Although partially restrained in their actions, they are in words, at least, as bold and audacious as ever. One single fact may be stated as not the least ominous or painful of the series. Lately a well-known statesman, holding a prominent situation in the councils of the Swiss Confederation, while haranguing a Radical assembly gave vent to his feelings and opinions, to an extent unexpected and painful, even to his own friends. In the very style of the *sans-culottes* of 1793, he alluded, as follows, to a portion of revealed truth. His party, he said, believed in a Trinity, as well as the aristocrats. Not in the form of a speculative and metaphysical theory; their's was a great fact, it was—Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. Liberty was to them as the Father, Equality as the Son, and Fraternity as the Holy Ghost!! From such men and such principles, who would not devoutly pray: "Good Lord deliver us!"

I regret to say, that, through the influence of such principles and tendencies, society here is being increasingly demoralised.—Drunkenness, uncleanness, the profanation of the Lord's-day, and other vices, are lifting up their hideous forms. While "iniquity has been abounding," I fear that "the love of many has been waxing cold;" Christians have been too indifferent to this state of things, or, to speak more correctly, perhaps, their efforts have not kept pace with increasing wants. A single fact may suffice under this head. Since 1845, the issues of the Tract Society of Lausanne have been two-thirds less than they had been prior to that period. Thank God, Christians are, however, at length, being more united and energetic in the cause of God; the good seed is being of late plentifully sown; and a more steadfast testimony borne to Christ and his cause. "When the enemy cometh

in as a flood, the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

Among other good publications which have lately appeared amongst us, I must not fail to mention two excellent treatises on the sanctification of the Christian Sabbath. They are both prize essays, published by the Book Society of Toulouse; and the authors are working people of the Canton de Vaud. The author of the first prize is a vine-dresser, of Villeneuve, on the Lemman lake, and was for some time a local preacher in our connexion. His book is entitled "The Sabbath was made for man." The authoress of the second prize, entitled "A Leaf from the Tree of Life, or the institution of the day of rest," is called Jenny Martin; she is a seamstress by trade, and a member of our Lausanne Society.

The annual meetings at Geneva, Basle, Berne, Neuchatel, and St. Gall, have just been held. They have been interesting and numerous attended. In the last mentioned Canton, as well as in Appenzell and Thurgovie, a religious awakening has commenced, principally by the spread of Missionary publications. In the mountains of Appenzell, as many as 4,000 families, it is said, have become interested in the Missionary cause. Surely this may be taken as a hopeful sign. There reated a visible gloom over the meetings at Geneva this year, notwithstanding the many encouraging facts which were reported concerning the progress of the work of God. The cause of grief was twofold. First, the defection of the Rev. Dr. Scherer, one of the Professors of the "Ecole de Theologie," on account of his altered and heterodox views on the inspiration of the Scriptures; and secondly because of the difficulties which the Society's colporteurs in France meet with,—difficulties which have almost put an end to their itinerant labours. You will learn with pleasure that we too, at Lausanne, are to have our annual meeting this year. It will be quite an epoch in our present history, for no such meetings have been held since the revolution, and the promulgation of the prohibitory laws of 1845! This sufficiently indicates that an altered and improving state of things has, in this respect, at least, commenced among us. How long this may last, we know not; but we are endeavouring, as I have said before, to profit by it. Our stated places of worship are now occupied; and our friends of the Free Church are even examining the possibility of building a large chapel for their services.

I must not fail, in conclusion, to refer to the interesting out-door services which have been held during the summer, in various parts of this Canton, and in Neuchatel.—They were precious opportunities for brotherly intercourse and mutual edification. There, National and Free Churchmen, Independents, Wesleyans, Moravians, Plymouth Brethren, and others, happy to lay aside, for a time, their differences, united in exhortations to "love and to good works." Let the reader fancy, if he can, these congregations, gathered from distances varying from five to as many as fifty miles, and assembled on the summit of some lofty mountain on the Jura range; there, amid the rich foliage of the forest, and magnificent views around, recruiting strength for fresh conflicts and duties, in the worship of their God, and in the society of each other. Your readers must not confound these large public meetings with our private gatherings of 1848, on the borders of the lake, and in the recesses of the woods. No, thank God, the churches now have "rest." May they be "edified, and, walking in the fear of God, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, be abundantly multiplied!"

British and Foreign Bible Society.

It appears from the 46th report of the Society, just presented, that the issues of the year have amounted to 1,136,695 copies, being 29,177 more than in the preceding year. The total issues have now amounted to 23,110,050 copies. The total receipts of the year have amounted to £91,635. The regular income of the present year, as compared with that of the preceding, shows an increase of £2,024. The total disbursements of the society since its commencement have been £3,648,012 4s. 3d. Through its agency the Scriptures have been printed

and circulated in 144 tongues, and auxiliaries and branches for distribution have been established in every part of the habitable globe.

Family Circle.

The Sacred Privacy of Home.

One of the most attractive features of a good home is its privacy. There, conversation is conducted with the freedom of mutual confidence and affection; there, the meal is divested of all formality and constraint and made truly social; there, relaxation is indulged without any consciousness of the conventionalities of society or the restraints of a cynical philosophy or an austere faith; there love is natural and free in its every expression and its every act; there, even worship is more simple and more heartfelt, because unbiassed by a regard for form or observation; and all this because there is throughout the family a community of interest such as cannot exist among a company of individuals not bound together by family ties. The presence of a stranger imposes more or less restraint, and the most familiar friend is at times a check upon the openness and hilarity of the family circle: it is the beauty of the family that while it gratifies the social instincts of our nature it preserves to us that privacy which we crave in proportion to our social cultivation, for the most loving heart would share its intimacies with but few and those if possible evermore the same. The tenants of hotels and boarding-houses may live peaceably and comfortably together, and may even contract a sort of intimacy and an affection for each other, but they cannot welcome every new-comer to their confidence, nor can they grasp each other with the warmth and vigour of a natural and permanent love. They have not the free range of the house; but must retreat to their several chambers, for the confidential exchanges of the heart; at the common table and in the common parlor, dress, manners and conversation are all under inspection, and the instinctive withdrawing of families to their own apartments for the closer communion of heart with heart, indicates that compound want of our nature which may perhaps be expressed by the term social privacy. For the sake of the country air or sea breezes, one can tolerate for a season the mixed company of a boarding house away from home; he may find advantages in the temporary commingling of families under one roof; he may form agreeable acquaintances and friendships that shall prove permanent; he may learn some valuable lessons of human nature and human life; but he will often yearn for the sacred privacy of home—a home conscious of no restraint but that of native delicacy and refined Christian feeling.

Honoured and cherished be the privacy of home; there let the man become a boy again, and the dignified statesman and the grave divine, without scandal, participate in the sports of childhood, . . . there let the notes of love and glee ring out as nature prompts them, without affectation and without prudishness.

It is the calamity of the poor in great cities that they cannot enjoy the seclusion of a home, but must occupy a mere place in a crowded tenement, and perhaps in a crowded apartment. The same evil in kind, though from other causes, is experienced by the earlier emigrants to a new country, who have often but a single apartment for all purposes and for all belonging to the company. This promiscuous herding of men, women, and children is contrary to nature, and unfavourable to social and moral cultivation. The family institution, with its combined advantages of seclusion and society, is the institution which God has appointed for the best development of man. The more we study this economy, the more we admire the wisdom and benevolence of its Author. "He setteth the solitary"—not in *phantasies*—but "in families."—Independent.

Laws of Health.

Children should be taught to use the left hand as much and as well as the right.

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