

MISSION FIELD.

The Missionary Review of the World.

The October number begins with an article on Islamism, by James S. Dennis, D.D., in which the weakness and strength of that greatest barrier to the progress of Christianity are set forth. Mohammedanism came into the world when Christianity was corrupt and enervated, and was easily overcome. To this day it remains "A Goliath amongst religions, a 'fighter in the path of God,' and although its military power and political supremacy have been so seriously restricted, it is still a dauntless antagonist in the field of religious conflict." Its strength is in its doctrine of the Divine sovereignty and control. Although the God of the Koran is cold and distant, only a mutilated representation of the God of the Christian "who comes into touch with humanity, and makes himself a part of the spiritual life of the believer in a sense which is utterly foreign to the Moslem ideal." "Islam is a religion which has seized upon the great fundamental truth of all religions, the existence of one God, and has adjusted this truth to the human consciousness of the average oriental with the least possible friction with human nature, and the least possible disturbance of the desires and passions of fallen humanity."

"Its terrible weaknesses and failures appear in the realm of practical religion and ethics. Its views of personal righteousness are the very acme of Phariseism." It conquered the Eastern world in an age of spiritual degeneracy, and holds to this day about two hundred millions of devotees in the very presence of Christianity.

Its success has been owing to such causes as these; having had its origin in the spirit of reform under the inspiration of the doctrine of the spirituality and unity of God, in contrast with the gross idolatry of heathen Arabia and the apostate Christianity of the seventh century; the power of the personal leadership of Mahomet, who was moved by the magnetic influence of conviction, backed by the power of the sword; its offer of salvation upon easy terms—granting large license and attractive promises to the sensual nature; and its rejection of the mysteries of Christianity, such as the Trinity, incarnation, and the high and practical ideal of Christian ethics, which they never saw illustrated in the lives of Christians.

Islamism is thus a rationalistic system and commends itself to the untaught humanity of the orient and is Satan's masterpiece as a weapon against Christianity.

There are several features of the present times that are interesting. 1. The attempt to propagate this religion in America, by Mohammed Webb, which will no doubt win some followers as Therophy and Buddhism have done already. 2. The attempts on the part of Justice Ameer Ali, in India to rid Islamism of slavery and polygamy and adapt it to modern civilization, thus introducing the "New Islam." 3. The brightening outlook of Christian Missions amongst Mohammedans. Although it has been the most difficult of all foes to conquer, yet considerable progress has been made.

Rev. R. Sallieus, Paris, gives a rather startling account of the revival of Roman Catholicism in an article entitled the "Papacy in Europe." He says that there is a spirit of propagandism that is a danger to the country. In the county of Sussex there are forty convents and monasteries, and they claim 900 conversions in the last year in England.

In France there is a truce between the papacy and the republic, and the people and secular press speak of the papacy with a degree of respect that is unusual. The Pope's encyclicals and speeches are carefully reported and favorably commented upon, and the old cry between church and state is shelved. In Germany Roman Catholics increase in Protestant communities, and instead of war with Rome, the Emperor has recently been paying his respects at the Vatican. Even in Slavonic countries in the Greek Church there is a party favorable to reunion with Rome.

The causes for this state of affairs are many. In Protestant countries it is owing to the loss of the Evangelical spirit in the churches. Wealth has brought with it the craving for elaborate services, luxurious churches, etc., the changing position of the Bible as the infallible guide—the Inquisition burned the Bible but the higher critics are tearing it to pieces. In France it is owing to the weakness and unsatisfactoriness of "free thought" which gives no hope for the future, the secularization of the schools resulting in ignorance of God and materialism; and the skill of Leo XIII in

adapting the church to the times. Inasmuch as the republic is established the Pope has instructed the Bishops no longer to identify themselves with the dead monarchies, and upon the questions of capital and labor, the Pope has given expression to liberal and evangelical sentiments, and now an effort is being made to form a Socialist Catholic party, a remarkable combination of the papacy with red democracy.

An encyclical letter is now issued which is an appeal for union with the Anglican and Greek churches. "Speaking of those nations who have for the last three centuries been separated from the church, the Pope argues that there is no certain rule of faith and authority left to them. A large number among them have overthrown the very foundations of Christianity by denying the divinity of Christ and the inspiration of the Scriptures." Thus the man who is the incarnation of that system that has burned the Bible, persecuted the disciples to the death, denied almost every doctrine, now poses as the champion of the Bible against Protestantism.

The only way, the writer thinks, to meet the aggressive spirit is to return to the simplicity and power of primitive Christianity and loyalty to the Bible as the infallible Word of God.

Dr. Pierson contributes the first of a series of papers on the times of Carey. Plates are given of the "Shoe shop at Hackleton, the house where Carey lived, the old chapel at Hackleton, and 'Widow Wallis' house at Ketring." A rapid sketch of Carey's life does little more than indicate the stages in his experiences, social and spiritual, until in 1793 he landed in Calcutta, and in 1800, after various trying experiences, began to work out his schemes at Serampore.

To any who take an interest in catalogues of societies existing for the translation and distribution of the Bible, an article by Rev. B. Rick, D.D., will be of value. There are at the present time about 100 of these societies at work, at the head of which list stands in importance the British and Foreign Bible Society, next the "National Bible Society of Scotland," and third "The American Bible Society."

The British Society has about 700 Colporteurs at work and distributes about one million copies annually. The Scottish Society distributes over one half a million copies, and employs about 400 Colporteurs, and the American Society distributes something less than one half a million. The Bible will be translated in whole or in part by the end of the century into about 400 languages—which is an immense achievement, but there are altogether about 2,000 languages—so that whilst the work that has been done is very great, the work to be done is still greater.

Dr. D. L. Leonard, of Oberlin, O., contributes a brief article, which is to be continued in "The Anglo-Saxon and the World's Redemption." Nations are specially called as well as individuals. The Jews were channels of the Scriptures, the Greeks of the language in which the Gospel could find suitable expression, the Romans brought peace and the unity of nations, and the British now embrace the qualities of all the preceding. The preparation for a thousand years by the assimilation of Saxon, Dane and Norman; the insular position, the composite character of the English language, which fits it for being the instrument for the universal spread of Christian civilization; the free institutions cherished by the Anglo-Saxons from the beginning of the history and which they are now scattering in all parts of the world; the moral earnestness and appetite for liberty of thought which neither Pope nor Prelate could suppress and resulted in the brood of dissenting churches, and finally the colonizing character which began about one hundred and fifty years ago, and resulted in that never to be repeated national development in this continent. All these movements in history were not by chance but a divine ordering for the most glorious purposes.

"A voice from Russia" is an interesting article in the present condition of the church in Russia, written by a Russian Christian. The Greek has always had this advantage over the Roman Church that the reading of the Bible is not prohibited, but is circulated amongst their people. The great weakness is legalism. Their Gospel is, "do this and live," but they have little knowledge of an indwelling Christ, who is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. The worship of the Virgin and Saints is carried to as great an extreme as in the Roman Church, and idols are common in their homes. There are indications of better days in the work of Lord Radstock in St. Petersburg and Rabinowitch amongst the Jews in South western Russia.