

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWSCALVIN AT GENEVA AND STRAS-
BURG.

(By Prof. Henry E. Dosker, D.D.)

Geneva occupied an ideal strategic position for the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Located at the end of Lake Leman, at the mouth of the Rhone, where the Alps touch the Jura, where Italy and Germany and France touch hands, its position was ideal for the furtherance of the great cause which then swayed the hearts and aroused the passions of all men. Its history reaches back into the dim Roman past and beyond. From the Franks it passed to the Burgundians and thence to the German Empire. The rapacity of the neighboring barons drove its citizens into the arms of the dukes of Savoy, who made it one of their residences and strongholds. Under their protection its episcopal see became hopelessly corrupt and nepotism bestowed the holy office on men of worldly character, parasites of the ruling lords and of libidinous habits. The morals of its clergy became notoriously corrupt, a stench in the nostrils of the people.

In 1526 the Genevese rebelled against the Savoyese and, under the leadership of Berthelier, threw off the galling yoke. The corrupt bishops ruled the city for a while as nominal lords. But the ferment of the Reformation touched Geneva. Wonderful news came from Zurich and Bern, from Germany and France. The air became electric and, when in 1532, Farel, the disciple of Lefevre, reached the city from the Waldensian valleys, the inevitable occurred. Viret soon joined him, the partisans of the new movement grew in numbers, and a strong reformatory nucleus was created. The infuriated clergy made frantic efforts to maintain themselves, but when they went to the extreme of attempting to poison the reformers (Viret suffered from this cause to the day of his death), their doom was sealed, and they were formally expelled from the city by a decree of the Great Council, August 28, 1535. "The papal religion was abolished and the Reformed religion, founded on the gospel, was established."

Farel and Viret became the recognized spiritual leaders. But what a task was theirs! Bonnivard, an old Genevan citizen, then living at Bern, had prophesied long before: "You hated the priests for being a great deal too much like yourselves, you will hate the preachers for being a great deal too unlike yourselves. You will not have them two years before you will wish them with the priests, and you will send them off with no other wages for their work than good blows, with a cudgel." He was a true prophet and he knew his people.

Look for a moment at the moral problem which confronted the Reformation at Geneva. Well chosen in the light of history was the early motto of Geneva—"Post tenebras lux," "after the darkness comes the light."

The flames of hell flared higher in Geneva than in any other city in Europe of its size at that time. Stahelin and Henry draw a picture on absolutely reliable authority which we dare not copy. The libertines set the pace of the moral life of Geneva. They were divided into spiritual and political libertines. A thin veneer of religion, on the part of the former, covered all manner of hideousness. They discarded faith in the devil, they denied both the liberty and immortality of the soul. Every human act, because not free but necessary, was alike

without merit or guilt. Sin, therefore, had no existence. Free love was openly advocated. Unmentionable sins were committed, the city was filled with nightly brawls, in which men and women reeled in drunken shame along the streets. Typical of the morality of the Genevese are the trials and execution of the so-called Infectionists, who during the plague deliberately infected every house in the city to decimate its inhabitants and to appropriate their possessions. Frightfully punished as was the crime, it was repeated in 1520, 1545 and 1568.

Into this inferno the high principled Calvin was hurled! Farel and Viret felt themselves unequal to the task which confronted them, and they were almost in despair. Suddenly they were informed by du Tillot, who was one of the French refugees in the city, of the presence of Calvin, the author of the "Institutes." It seemed God's voice to Farel. He hastened to Calvin's lodgings and begged him to stay. Calvin refused. Farel insisted and finally threatened him with the curse of God if he dared to set aside this divine call. With a shudder Calvin hesitatingly surrendered and remained.

At first he simply expounded the Scriptures and received only a nominal compensation. In all the records of that early day he is only referred to as "The Frenchman." The disputation at Lausanne, in September, 1536, however, revealed his powers and when, a month later, he returned to Geneva, he was formally elected pastor and installed at St. Peter's. His eagle glance at once grasped the situation and, with iron determination, he began to enforce his motto—"Liberty but order." A brief confession of faith was composed by the pastors and accepted by the people and Calvin began to insist on Church discipline. The enemy was dazed by the courage of the attempt, and the grossest sins of the city were suppressed or driven from the public gaze.

OTHER LIVES PRECIOUS.

By C. H. Wetherbe.

Whenever I read the sentiments which are profusely expressed in favor of mercy being shown toward those who have deliberately and heartlessly murdered the victim of their lust, or hatred, or avarice, I at once think of the value, the liberties, the privileges and pleasures of the life that has been mercilessly destroyed. A large amount of fraudulent sentiment is bestowed upon murderers, even by people who are supposed to be intelligent and balanced Christians. They talk very solemnly about the value of human life, and declare that it is decidedly wrong for a murderer to be the subject of capital punishment. Do these people ever consider the preciousness of the life that has been ruthlessly destroyed by a cold-blooded and merciless murderer, and even without any warning? Are they at all concerned about the dear relatives of the murdered one as they mourn day and night over their unutterable loss?

A young woman of more than ordinary talent, noble in character, the joy of her parents and sisters, and a favorite in society, was deliberately and most horribly murdered two years ago in the State of New York, by a young man who had, by cunning devices, seduced her. And yet hundreds of people have been gushing about the value of that young man's life.

During his trial it was conclusively shown that he was guilty. But the sentimentalists said that he ought not to be executed for his crime. He himself said that he wanted to continue to live. Every murderer says the same thing. What a value they place upon their own life! How little do they value the life of their victims! They care nothing about the sorrow of the relatives of the murdered ones. And are the sympathizers of the murderer to whom I have referred concerned about the precious life of his victim? Do they think of the pangs of a great sorrow which still stings the hearts of her near relatives? What great inconsistency it is to manifest sympathy for that fiendish murderer, and yet act indifferently about the precious life that he crushed out, and about the whole family that are left in great mourning! Value the life of others.

IS POETRY ON THE DECLINE?

When other topics fail, magazine writers invariably resort to the supposititious decline of poetry. A lady writing in *The Bookman* asserts: "Writers of verse are left, but let us accept the fact that this is a mechanical and commercial age, and not seek to replace Tennyson and Lowell by writers plainly unworthy to tie their shoe latches." Speaking of magazine poetry, the same writer affirms that "terrible stuff can be found in almost every issue of otherwise excellent periodicals. These verses team with every imaginable fault, the slenderest and most unpoetical of ideas being expressed in lines whose rhythm defies scanning and whose attempts at rhyme are an offence to both eye and ear." We, part of whose business it is to scan the magazines month after month cannot subscribe to this pessimistic opinion. While there is much drivel, never a month passes without the publication of at least half dozen poems that seem worthy of preservation. Men are wont to seek the golden age in the past, or in the distant future; even in Shakespeare's days, they have deplored the deterioration of the drama, and we need not turn many pages in the critical journals of Victorian days in order to find utterances even more pessimistic than those in *The Bookman*. The late T. B. Aldrich, in a letter to Mr. Madison Cawein, regrets that in England as well as in the United States, the one poet who has had a great following is dead, and that no one has come to take his place. Yet, he hopefully admits, and this is a point we, too, should like to make, perhaps the great poet is with us incognito even now. "When Keats was laid in his grave at Rome," Mr. Aldrich remarks, "there were not twelve—no, there were not two men in England who suspected that a great poet had been laid at rest. Leigh Hunt had a strong idea that Keats was a fine poet, but not as fine a poet as Leigh Hunt. Byron, Moore, Rogers, and Southey could not read 'The Eve of St. Agnes' and 'Hyperion.' No great poetry (except, possibly, in the case of Tennyson) was ever immediately popular."—*Current Literature*.

The crown of patience can not be received where there has been no suffering. If thou refusest to suffer thou refusest to be crowned; but if thou wishest to be crowned thou must fight manfully and suffer patiently. Without labor none can obtain rest, and without contending there can be no conquest.—Thomas à Kempis.