

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

THE REV. H. DE LA HARPE, GENEVA.

MR. EDITOR.—During last week a new object of missionary enterprise has excited the interest of the Christian people of Canada. The Rev. Mr. Dodds, co-worker with Mr. McAll in the Belleville mission in Paris, has spread before us the "White Fields of France," and has told us of the amazing progress made by evangelistic work in that country. The glad tidings have cheered our hearts like the joy of a coming harvest, for "if France be moved, we shall move the whole of Europe." Mr. Dodds has told us much of Paris and its surroundings, and of many of its doors being now open to receive the Gospel. The messenger had scarcely left our city when another voice reached us from the continent of Europe—the voice not of gladness, however, but of deep sorrow, as it informed us of the death of the Rev. Louis Henri de la Harpe, Professor in the Theological School of the Evangelical Society of Switzerland. His praise is in all the Churches both of the old and the new world. His heart has been the spring, and his home the centre, of Christian influence for many years in the city of our early Reformers.

Besides the obituary notice, the "Semaine Religieuse," the organ of Evangelical Protestantism, gives a deeply interesting biographical sketch of this devoted, accomplished and greatly beloved servant of God. Believing that many of our friends would wish to know a little of this man of God, whose life in public and in private was an embodiment of "the things that are lovely and of good report," I have translated the sketch, for which I hope you will kindly spare a column in THE PRESBYTERIAN. Reciprocal benefits may be derived by occasionally drawing closer the cord of sympathy between the younger Churches of the colony and the older ones of the continent of Europe, and when, as now, God's voice speaks to labourers *here* and labourers *there*, let them not lose the lesson. In a lecture delivered lately in Edinburgh by the Rev. Mr. Guthrie, of Liberton, he observed that 300 years ago the relations between France and Scotland were more intimate than was generally supposed, and he illustrated how the intercourse between these two countries bore on the great religious movement then in progress, by way of shewing the obligations of the Scotch Reformed Church to France in the sixteenth century, and then *our* duty to France in the nineteenth. In this connection he recalled the fact that the leading Scottish Reformers resorted as students to France for training and culture, and received another training besides, for the Reformation cause had already taken root there. Nor must they forget how much, indirectly, *our* great Reformer owed to one of the most famous men that country ever produced. Calvinism and Presbyterianism were planted by Knox, and the man who chiefly influenced him was that son of France, John Calvin, one of God's chiefest gifts to her, as to Switzerland, to Scotland, and to the world. It ought, moreover, to be gratefully remembered that France afforded an asylum to many of God's servants from Scotland, whom the troubles of their times made exiles. He shewed that the present was an eminently favourable moment for helping that country, when a moral and spiritual revolution seemed imminent there. Never since 1589, when the Edict of Nantes gave to France complete civil and religious freedom, had religious liberty so wide a door open for it as had France at this very hour.

E. B. BURNS.

Toronto, Dec. 13th, 1880.

"The Free Church of Geneva and the Theological School of the Evangelical Society have just sustained a great loss in the death of Professor Louis Henri de la Harpe. Of Swiss origin, by his father, he was cousin-german of General Frederick Cæsar de la Harpe, tutor of the Czar Alexander I. By his mother, Professor de la Harpe was French. He inherited from his parents the affability and grace which characterized him. He was born at Bordeaux, on the 13th January, 1809, and was remarkable for his great precocity. At the early age of nine years, under the guidance of a very distinguished German tutor, he had learned to read fluently his New Testament both in Greek and Latin. At the same time he studied German, and laid the basis of that knowledge of English which he afterwards so thoroughly acquired. Moreover, from his earliest years Monsieur de la Harpe gave his

heart to God; when a mere boy he taught children the fear of the Lord. He very soon became priest in his own family, and had the joy of bringing them all to the faith. During a residence of some years in Scotland he took the degree of M.A., and at the same time, 1828, carried off the first prize in Natural Philosophy. His principles were still more established by contact with the brave Scottish nation, and acquired that character of steadfastness which distinguished them to the end. At the same time that he borrowed from this country (Switzerland) his deep attachment to the Reformed doctrines, he held the independent principles which in later years were to be so triumphant in the Churches. Mr. de la Harpe began his theological studies in 1829 at Montauban, his heart consecrated to Him whom he wished to serve. This was a fortunate circumstance, for, as he remarked in a sermon scarcely five months ago, the Theological School of Montauban and the Church of France were then plunged into a state of extreme lukewarmness. After having published some theses on the authenticity of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the composition of which by the Apostle Paul he supported, Mr. de la Harpe, Bachelor in Theology, came with his brother Alphonses, then beginning his studies, to take his place as a student in the Theological School of Geneva. He attended most assiduously the six months' winter course of 1832-33. In some manuscript notices which we have before us, his professors delight to recall the dignity of his manners, the excellent example which he set before his fellow-students, and the very cultivated and edifying style in which he lectured; but they particularly note one fact which rather repelled them, namely, his dissenting leanings, although he declared that he did not wish to assume this character as a minister, feeling the necessity of preaching the Gospel wherever the door would be open. It would appear that at this period he would have severely judged the popular tendencies of the School, in the correspondence of Monsieur de Frontin. The study of the Oriental languages, particularly of the Syriac, occupied him chiefly during this first residence in Germany, where he had, as his professor, the lamented Dr. Haeverneck. Having returned for some time to Bordeaux, he at first held private meetings in his own house and then preached all around. On the 24th of May, 1837, he was ordained at Orleans to the holy ministry, and was preparing to enter the service of the Reformed Church when a call reached him from Geneva. Dr. Haeverneck had been succeeded in the Professorship of Hebrew in the Theological School by Mr. Samuel Rieswerk, recently from the church of Basle. Mr. Rieswerk had suddenly allowed himself to be carried away by Irvingite errors, and several students followed him. After painful discussions, the directors of the School separated from this otherwise very distinguished fellow-labourer, and it was arranged that his place should be supplied by a young Swiss candidate, Mr. Armand de Mestral, who was then preparing for a professorship in Berlin. Mr. de Mestral requested at least two years to finish his studies, and on the 25th May, of the same year (1837), on the proposal of Monsieur Merle, the Theological department invited Mr. de la Harpe to accept for eighteen months, in the School, the Chair of Exegesis and Sacred Criticism of the Old Testament. The young divine responded to this call with the amiable readiness which, from that time, he always shewed in undertaking all the pleasant or difficult duties which devolved upon him; and in November, 1837, he took possession of that Chair, which, with some interruptions, he occupied for forty-three years. Very soon, indeed, Mr. de Mestral's health becoming more and more precarious, he retired from the professorship, Mr. de la Harpe was appointed to all the functions. From that period the young professor devoted himself entirely to the work of the Evangelical Society, and while continuing a Frenchman at heart, he in reality looked upon Geneva as his second country. In 1850 he married Miss Hay, niece of Lord Dalhousie, a former Governor of Canada (which she visited in her early days with her uncle, and in the progress of which she still takes a lively interest). This union afforded him thirty years of complete happiness. Thirteen years later they built the villa of 'Les Contamines,' where he lived till the end.

"Splendid offers were speedily made to the Professor 'de L'Oratoire,' who after a few years gave to the School his time and his labours gratuitously.

"In 1849, the Presidency of the English College in

Malta was offered him by Lord Shaftesbury, through Dr. Crawford, with a large endowment and great advantages; he refused. In Scotland, Dr. Guthrie made numerous overtures to him; he still refused. At length, on the part of the Government, his brother-in-law Monsieur le Baron Haussman invited him to Paris as Professor of Oriental Languages in the College of France, holding out to him the probability of occupying a still higher and more desirable charge, in which he might render invaluable service to French Protestantism. He again refused. Void of personal ambition, he preferred his peaceful residence and unobtrusive instruction to the most brilliant situations, because according to his conscience he was fully satisfied. With his great experience and inexhaustible complacency and entire devotedness to the Lord's work, he possessed a weighty influence whether as presiding in the School of Theology and the Evangelical Society, or in the administration of the Free Church, in which he took part from the beginning, and which appointed him to the duties of an elder and member of Presbytery in 1853. Delighting to preach, not for preaching's sake but for the opportunity it gave him of proclaiming the mercy of his God, Monsieur de la Harpe, although never assuming the office of minister of the Word in the Church, still frequently officiated. He was always kind, ready to give help, and supply the place of the regular pastor. He had astonishing facility. Endowed with very extensive general culture, having read much and remembering all he had read, knowing thoroughly his Bible, which was truly the Book for him, he could, without long preparation, present to his hearers healthful and fertile ideas. Although he may not have been run after by the multitude, still he gathered around his pulpit a certain class of God's people whom he edified by his evangelical preaching. A child of revival, he preached its doctrines without any modification or compromise. He had little confidence in arguments, and considered that it was by evidence rather than by subtle reasoning that souls were won to the faith.

"The Professor's method of teaching bore a strong affinity to that of his preaching: great variety, a crowd of correct ideas, precise, luminous perceptions, with great freedom of style, a certain want of connection, and frequent digressions. Although he knew his subject thoroughly and was fully master of the Hebrew language, Mr. de la Harpe had difficulty in confining himself to fragmentary Scripture or to the subject of criticism which he treated. (This is the testimony which a learned German Rabbi gave us one day.) To the Professor's mind one fact recalled another, and very soon, yielding to his brilliant imagination, or to his astonishing memory, he poured upon us such a flood of knowledge that its course was a true Encyclopædia. At the close of his lectures one might complain of not having got much Hebrew, but how many things, and precious things, had one learned which would be afterwards useful in the service of the ministry! In short, Mr. de la Harpe scattered his resources. His life was, like his teaching, at the service of every one, in all work which concerned the kingdom of God. A member of many committees, establishing with his own means an infant school at Eaux-vives, maintaining it at his own expense in a very comfortable building, he went from the examination of these little children to that of his students, at the same time that he was preparing notes upon important mathematical questions for the Society of Physical and Natural Science, or writing for the Geographical Society, the 'Globe' newspaper, or it might be turning with his own hands, or for relaxation making little gems to enrich the tables of some bazaar! It is cause of great regret that Mr. de la Harpe has not left behind him any permanent work. Not more careful of his fame than of his ease, he did not allow himself time to write that Hebrew Grammar which he sketched, nor that general and special introduction to the Old Testament of which some pages only have received their definite form. Nevertheless, what clearness in this treatise of the Hebrew characters which he has written, and what clear perception in that introduction which stands erect like the entrance to an edifice which will never be finished! Yes, as we look upon these unfinished works we feel sad and disposed to be angry with those inconsiderate people among whom we number ourselves, who never ceased to overburden a venerable brother, whose only fault was not being able to refuse anything. But there is one work of his