

Pastor and People.

GREAT AND SMALL.

I love to lie awhile and look
Into the bubblings of a brook.
Nor do I greatly long to know
Of silent tides to which they flow.
Nor wonder, when the sunbeams play,
How many sunbeams make a day.

My faith accepts as wisely planned
The things I do not understand:
I cannot doubt the rainbow knows
A secret hidden from the rose;
But rather would my flower see
Than solve the heavenly mystery.

'Tis not that I ignore the great,
Only I am content to wait.
The Infinite hath too fierce a glare
For my poor human sight to bear,
While little things—more dear to me—
Show sidelights of eternity.

—John Hall Ingham.

PROSPECTS OF RELIGION IN FRANCE.

BY REV. E. J. DUPUY.

Compared to American Home Missions, the French Evangelizing Societies are very modest in many respects. Referring to the proportion of Protestants in France, one to fifty-three, immediately one can imagine that the first efforts in any country place are to group the twenty, thirty, or more, Protestants, and secondly, to gain the confidence and esteem of those who do not belong to our denomination. When a pastor has secured the names of the Protestants, and it is sometimes difficult to find them out, he visits them, or writes them to meet at his house. That is the beginning. Interest them, rouse up the religious feeling that was in an icy condition; excite their zeal, bring them to acknowledge their responsibilities, and set them at work to find out other unknown Protestants, or speak to their friends and bring them to the meetings. This arduous task covers months sometimes; but, if done with a prayerful spirit, is done with entire consecration, the first result is that the parlor where the pastor held the meetings can no longer hold the listeners.

In a small town a shop will be rented and fitted up with chairs and a platform. Soon, people will flock in, through mere curiosity: "What can that man say?" The attendance increases steadily; but still the pastor must not be too sanguine, for soon the idlers or light-minded will get tired of hearing sermons; the devoted members of the Roman Church are warned not to go any more to that dangerous place; and finally there remains a small congregation, the nucleus.

Then begins the second part of the work. The pastor must be on the watch, with constant prayer he must follow the souls thirsting for love and truth; he must encourage the timid; now begins the building of the new church. All means will be employed to hinder him in his work; false reports, noise in the meetings, bitter articles in the religious papers, or in the political Catholic papers, fiery sermons in the other Church. But, however, the more strenuous these efforts, the more united the little congregation. Conversions take place, few at a time, slowly, perhaps, but the membership increases. Years pass on, sometimes ten, fifteen, twenty, before a strong congregation is built, before a chapel is dedicated.

But during this period, more or less long, the work was not merely confined to the town or village where the pastor is located. Very rapidly, from village to village, from farm to farm, the news had spread that a preacher was living in A., and was holding meetings. Other Protestants were found in the vicinity; tracts and Bibles were distributed; circumstances would happily favour the preaching of the gospel in different neighbouring villages. For instance, the funerals are considered as the best occasions to speak frankly and earnestly, to present the sacrifice of Christ in all its purity, and produce a deep impression on the audience. According to the custom, the pastor follows the hearse to the cemetery, and there, in that dread-

ful stillness, in that hush of all feelings in the presence of death, he speaks; and often some hear for the first time the good tidings.

There is such a striking difference between the Roman prayers, mumbled in Latin, and these accents aiming to comfort; there is so much formality and coldness on one side, so much power and love on the other, that even should the pastor be not eloquent, those present are deeply moved. Often conversions have taken place after these ceremonies; souls troubled or weary have found out at last the bright pathway leading to the Father of mercies, the everlasting Comforter. It may happen also that a man who had not the courage to join the new Church during his life, will express at his last moments the supreme desire to be buried as a Protestant.

So, from village to village, the news has spread, and here and there two or three families are gained; the work increases steadily; and woe to the pastor if he does not visit regularly—the oftener the better—if he is not ready to give up all his rest and personal satisfactions, to minister to the earnest, thoughtful souls who are searching for Christ.

Thus the little church is composed of two elements; the centre or nucleus, in the town or village, R., for example; and thirty neighbouring villages, called "annexes," where only a few members are located.

What we have said is, in the general way, the history of many churches, now strong and living centres. We have only viewed the work as started in places where already a few Protestants were settled. We will later give some facts, showing through how many difficulties these churches grew.

Within a few weeks there has been in France a great opposition against Protestants. Why? For the only reason that of late Protestants have been gaining steadily; and all the forces of Romanism and of free-thought are united to defeat these Protestants. Because the minority is no longer in the dark, but has become aggressive and meets with great sympathy. Nobody attacks a dead man. If they attack Protestantism, it is because Protestantism is gaining in life and strength. But God is with His servants, and we fear not.—The Christian Observer.

THE FUNCTIONS OF A CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

The following remarks were called forth by our Ottawa contemporary, The Daily Free Press, in connection with the resignation recently of the Rev. John Wood, pastor of the Congregational church there, and are so timely that we reproduce them in our columns.—Ed.

Ottawa is, it appears, not the only place where church-goers are inclined to measure the worth of a pastor by his ability to "draw" hearers or preach sensational sermons. The subject is exciting attention in the United States, and Rev. Lyman Abbott, who succeeded the late Rev. Henry Ward Beecher as pastor of Plymouth church, Brooklyn, contributes an article to the current number of the Forum, in which he takes strong grounds against the proposition that it is part of a Christian preacher's functions to preach sermons designed to attract large congregations, and thus build up his church financially. Dr. Abbott says he does not feel complimented when a member of his congregation tells him that he or she "has been greatly entertained" by his sermon. He does not admit that it is any part of a clergyman's function to "entertain" his congregation, or that a minister should be measured by his ability to draw. The Christian preacher does not stand on the same plane with the actor or the lecturer, and Dr. Abbott seems to have small regard for mere "pulpit orators," who regard themselves as artists and their sermons as "works of art," or whose great ambition is to fill the pews of churches with expectant congregations and then to make them weep or laugh or shiver and creep with sense of awe. "The oratorical ambition," Dr. Abbott says, "is

fatal to any preacher who entertains it. Under its influence he often becomes either grandiloquent or histrionic and always loses that genuineness and simplicity which are the essentials of true pulpit success." It is not the function of the preacher of the gospel to entertain or interest the minds of his hearers, but to enliven their spiritual natures. "The distinctive function of the ministry," Dr. Abbott tells us, "is to inspire spiritual life; that life out of which all other life, both individual and social, grows and by which it is directed and controlled—the life of faith which looks upon the things which are unseen and eternal; the life of hope which presses eagerly forward out of all the disappointments and successes of the past toward the mark for the prize of the calling up higher which continually comes from God; and the life of love which makes all men one because one in God, the Father of all." Briefly, a minister is not appointed to "draw" a congregation, nor to entertain them when they are drawn. His mission is that of his Master, who said of himself: "I have come that they might have life and might have it abundantly."

This being so, Dr. Abbott argues that the preacher cannot give what he does not possess, and that, therefore, there is no place in the ministry for the rationalist, the pessimist or the egoist. Men of these temperaments must either vanquish their temperaments or must look for employment elsewhere. If the preacher's beliefs in God, immortality, sin, forgiveness, inspiration and Christ, are mere traditional inheritances or scientific conclusions, hypothetically worked out in the school room, he is not the necessary equipment to be a prophet of the spiritual world to unspiritual men. If he be an egoist; if he believes practically or theoretically in the motive: "Take care of number one; if he enters the profession for the rewards it will confer upon him; for the social prestige it gives, or the intellectual leisure it affords, or the immunity from the struggle in which his less fortunate fellows are engaged, the element of sympathy, Dr. Abbott says, is lacking which equally with the spirit of faith and of hope make up the life which it is the prophet's function to impart, and with which therefore the prophet must be equipped.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

There are many bright days given us by our Heavenly Father; but as He sees it is best that we should have alternate day and night in the natural world, so we all have our night times of sorrow and care. Yet we are told that in the darkest hours "He giveth songs." Did you ever think what this means, or better yet did you ever feel what it means? If you are a disciple of Jesus, a true child of God, you have no doubt felt it, and your weary soul has been soothed and cheered by this heavenly minstrelsy, and you have realized that its melody was sweeter far than the notes of the Eolian harp, coming as it does from the great kind heart of Him "who, never weary, watches where His people be." To all of His sorrowful children have there sweet songs come, sometimes as sweet as echoes, things heard and learned in His house at some brighter period of our lives. Was it in the night of bereavement? Did death come with its icy hand and touch one near and dear to you? Did he take your darling child, and did you see on the precious little body, as you laid it in the casket, dark spots already around the little throat, from the inflammation which had taken the dear little life away; and as you looked on these evidences of corruption and decay in that dear little body, "bone of your bone" and "flesh of your flesh," how came it that, instead of these signs filling your heart with horror, a voice whispered to you of the things to come, and reminded you that "this mortality shall put on immortality, this corruption must put on incorruption" till, in anticipation and confident expectation of that blessed day, your spirit was lifted up and your aching heart soothed and

cheered as by Heavenly minstrelsy. Have you been rich in this world's goods and have you been stripped of all in these latter days and forced to depend on daily work for your bread, or daily effort and daily trust in God, which should go together if you are a true disciple? How is it that when you read that our Saviour, though rich, for our sake became poor, you seem to realize so the greatness of His love, that it comes to you as a sweet, sweet song in your night of poverty and toil. It may be that other dark hours come to you, for there are some more grievous to be borne than those which come from bereavement or poverty. It may be that you see one near and dear to you falling into sin, deeper and deeper into sin. You pray fervently and constantly that God would stop him in his mad career. You know that he is all-powerful, that He rules in the armies of Heaven; and it seems a small thing that, He should rule and reign over one wicked heart. You try to have faith, and you feel that in the arms of faith and prayer you would take him and bear him to the Master, as did the women their suffering loved ones, when the Saviour was here among men. You love this erring one so dearly, it seems that you could hardly rest yourself, "in the Heavenly fold, with this precious lamb astray in the mountains cold." In such a night as this, these words, "What I do ye know not now, but ye shall know hereafter," come to the soul, all weary and distracted, and bring sweet visions of that bright hereafter until refreshed and settled, strengthened and strengthened, it can trust all into His hands and cast all care upon Him who careth for us, saying, humbly and sincerely:—

"I know the hand that is guiding me,
Through the darkness into the light,
And I know that all betiding me
Is meted out aright.
For I know, though hid from my mortal sight,
God's plans are all complete,
Though the darkness at present be not light,
And the bitter be not sweet.

—Grey.

BY HIS FOOT-PRINTS.

A philosopher who denied the existence of God was crossing the great desert of Sahara, accompanied by an Arab guide. He noticed his guide kneeling upon the burning sand, and addressing a prayer to God. Finally, one evening, the philosopher, seeing his guide arising after his prayer, asked him with a contemptuous smile:—

"How do you know there is a God?" The guide replied quietly: "How can I know that a man and not a camel has passed my hut during the shades of the night? Is it not by his footprints upon the sand?" In the same manner," he added, pointing with his finger to the sun, the last rays of which were breaking over the solitudes of the desert, "that footprint there is not that of man."

Two years ago, a conference of the clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church, met at Moscow to discuss the alarming growth of Stundism and devise a plan for its suppression. A number of outrageously cruel enactments to this end, were suggested to the Government by this body of Christian ministers, most of which were afterwards put in force, e. g., the kidnapping of Stundist children from their parents, the stigma on Stundist passports, etc. But notwithstanding all their effort to suppress it, the Orthodox Church is now face to face with an alarming increase of vitality among the persecuted "heretics." The provinces of Kherson and Kiev are again in a ferment, and the most recent news has it that hundreds of families are declaring themselves Stundists, and that thousands more are in sympathy with them. The Holy Synod has taken alarm, and has now convoked another conference for the early autumn of this year. Special invitations to the conference have been sent to priests living in Stundist localities; and we are justified in presuming that still more drastic regulations for the extermination of the pestilent Stundists will be the outcome of the second gathering. "We trust," says an American exchange, "the American people will closely watch this conference, and mark the conclusions it arrives at. With Russia posturing for our fraternal regard, we do well to see that she is not a terror at home, to the best and bravest of her own subjects."