

The First Protestant Church in America.

Rio de Janeiro was first occupied by French settlers. Among those who saw the advantages of the place, that has long been the leading capital of South America was Nicholas Durand de Villegagnon, a Knight of Malta and a bold and skillful seaman. Knowing that Admiral Coligny, the great leader of the Huguenots, was deeply interested in planting the Reformed religion in North and South America, he sought his patronage and co-operation in a plan for sending out a party of colonists to settle at Rio de Janeiro. Coligny became very much interested in the scheme, and used his influence at the French court with such success, that in 1553 Henry the Second furnished three small vessels for the enterprise. They sailed from Havre de Grace, but were caught in a severe storm and compelled to put in at Dieppe. The dangers that they had but just escaped, almost within sight of their native land, filled the minds of many of those who had joined the expedition with such fear that they left the ships at Dieppe. Under the command of Villegagnon, after a long and perilous voyage, they entered the bay of Nicterohy and fortified a small island now called Lage. The fort which they built of wood could not resist the action of the flood-tide, and they removed further up to the island named after the leader of the company, Villegagnon, and here erected a more substantial fortress and called it Coligny. Certain acts of cruelty and injustice on the part of the Portuguese had aroused the bitter hostility of the natives, but they looked upon the French as their friends, and greeted them with every demonstration of joy, which found outward expression in kindling immense bonfires. After many trials, the settlers seemed to see the dawn of a day of brightness and prosperity. Here upon their island home they erected a rude place of worship, and held their simple Protestant services three-score and ten years before the Mayflower cast anchor in Plymouth Bay, and more than half a century before the Episcopal service was first held by the English colonists who found a home on the banks of the James river in Virginia.

On the return of the vessels that had carried out this company of French Protestants to Brazil, the church in Geneva became very deeply interested in furthering this plan of emigration, and sent out

two ministers and fourteen students. Calvin, Theodore Beza, and other leaders of the Reformation were still living, and as they saw the gathering tempest that was to fall in such a storm of death upon the followers of the Reformed faith in many portions of Europe, they no doubt looked with prayer and hope to the open door of refuge that the new world across the Atlantic seemed providentially to open. But all these hopes were soon destroyed.

As soon as Villegagnon thought his strength sufficient, he threw off the mask under which he had cloaked his treacherous designs, and began to harass and oppress the Huguenots by every means in his power. Many of them were forced by his tyranny to return to France, and ten thousand Protestants who were about to embark for the new colony, hearing the story of the treachery of Villegagnon, remained at home. Although he attempted to enlist the aid of the Jesuits, he found his force much diminished by his cruel and contemptible actions, and he sailed for France in quest of recruits. During his absence the Portuguese governor, by order of his court, attacked and dispersed the settlement. For a few years the French attempted to keep up the colony, but in 1567 the Portuguese became masters of Rio. Brief and unfortunate as is this history of the first Protestant Church in America, we may rejoice that the outlook of the future gives indication of a time when a pure faith, grounded in the principles of religious liberty, will hold sway through this great Empire of Brazil.—*Gospel in all Lands.*

Letter from Rev. K. J. Grant.

Rev. K. J. Grant, under date Barbadoes, West Indies, June 24th 1881, writes to Rev. Wm. Donaldson:

"Just think of it, already 100 years on board steamer Alhambra, from New York and two days yet before we reach Trinidad. Our steamer is slow and so foul that she does not exceed six miles an hour, and the delays at the Ports of call which appear to us to be unnecessary and avoidable, become almost intolerable. I can only express the hope that I may not be again obliged to take passage by this line until the Company insists upon its agents acting with despatch.

I regret thus to write as direct steam