

breaking, which is now eating out the very heart of the Protestant Churches. These things are open and clear to all observers, and are causing sadness of heart to many of God's dear children.

Many professing Christians content themselves with one service on Sabbath, and sometimes not that. Alas, that these things should exist in the Christian Church!

Let us individually watch and pray, and strive to take away these and other stumbling-blocks, and cultivate consistency of heart and life to Jesus our Saviour; and preaching the Gospel, to the Jew first, God shall bless us, and the ends of the earth shall see His salvation.

MINISTERIAL RECOMMENDATION OF SUBSCRIPTION BOOKS.

MR. EDITOR,—The sale of not a few subscription books is largely promoted by the recommendations of ministers, which are expected and intended to be a guarantee to those with whom their personal characters and the nature of their office have weight of the reliability of such works on the subjects of which they treat. This is all right and proper, but it would be well if greater caution and better discrimination were exercised, before the names of men who, above all others, enjoy the esteem and confidence of the public, are lent in the interest of book publishers and their agents.

The necessity for this will be apparent, by reference to Ridpath's "Cyclopedia of Universal History," a large and comprehensive work now before the public.

Treating of the character and influence of Calvin's teaching in connection with the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the author says: "The natural austerity, gloom and colour of Calvin's character were reflected in his theological system." He next gives a fair synopsis of that system, identical in all respects with that formulated in our own doctrinal standards, and then proceeds to pass judgment upon it in the following fashion:

Such were the leading doctrines of that system of which Calvin became the founder. The system took hold of the minds and hearts and lives of those who accepted it with the grip of fate. No other code of religious doctrine ever professed by any branch of the human family laid upon mankind such a rod of chastisement. The natural desires, instincts and pleasures of the human heart fell bleeding, and died under the wheels of this iron car. Human nature, in its entirety, was crushed and beaten as if in a mortar. The early Calvinists in Switzerland, France, England and Scotland grew as relentless and severe as the system which they accepted. No such religious rigours had ever been witnessed in the world as those which prevailed where the Calvinistic doctrines flourished. Many of the practices of the Church, which became organic around these doctrines, were as cruel and bloody as those of Rome. Persecutions were instituted which would have done credit to the Council of Constance and the days of John Huss. (Vol. ii., p. 621.)

As a matter of course, that stock brickbat of Infidels and Arminians—the case of Servetus—is next produced, and hurled with terrific force, with the object, no doubt, of barring the progress of the "iron car" above mentioned.

In one short paragraph only does the author refer to John Knox, and that solitary reference is by no means appreciative:

Meanwhile the Reformation had spread into the North, and old John Knox stood like a figure rampant on the shield of Scotch theology. In him the forbidding aspect of the country and the austerity of the national character were intensified, and to this was added the still darker shadow of the Geneva doctrines. The Scotch took naturally to the system which seemed to reflect the joyless moods of their own inner life. Catholicism went to the wall. (Vol. ii., page 662.)

Proof without stint might be adduced from the work of an ill-disguised spirit of hostility to evangelical Christianity as a directing agency in the world's progress, but the task is needless. It would be difficult to find language better fitted than that quoted to prejudice the minds of youthful students of history against the system which embodies all that we love and venerate as the truth of God.

When we find that truth thus misrepresented and maligned, the conviction is forced upon us that, however excellent may be the literary and artistic character of the book, it is no fit guest for Presbyterian homes.

We find many ministers of our Church, however, differing from this judgment of it. One says: "It is altogether a book of such interest and value to the young that it should be in every household." Another is convinced that "it would be hard to say anything

too extravagant in praise of such a book." A third believes that "all who desire to have their children liberally educated in the great social, moral and political problems of the age will do well to place this work in the family library." A city minister thinks "it is invaluable to the student as a reliable and convenient work of reference." Another commends it as "thoroughly reliable, clear and comprehensive"; while the remaining ministers of the same place "endorse" and "concur in" his estimate of it! Whither are we drifting? W. T.

LETTER FROM EROMANGA

In a letter from the Rev. H. A. Robertson, missionary at Eromanga, who visited a number of our Canadian congregations recently, the following passages occur:

There has not been a hurricane of any force on this island for four years, and no heavy sea breaking on the coast, but we have had several severe shocks of earthquake, though they were not followed by any tidal-wave. The most severe was on the 16th April at half-past five o'clock p.m. That shock destroyed much of the plaster on our buildings and threw down a large portion of our stone wall or dyke, and the mountains above us swayed to and fro like a ship on the water, and the water in Williams' River was dashed from side to side like water in a basin, and the smoke, caused by the dust rising as the rocks and stones were sent tearing and plunging down the side of the mountains, ascended like smoke from a burning mountain. It was terrible while it lasted. Some of our young men were drawing gravel with a horse and cart, but they left the horse and cart and fled, when they saw the horse staggering about trying to keep its equilibrium. But I do not wonder at any person becoming alarmed during a severe earthquake, for nothing makes one feel as if the end had come, or at least the beginning of the end, so much as a severe shock of earthquake. But we never experienced anything here so terrible as the earthquakes of Java and some other countries, such as the Sandwich Islands and New Zealand.

Our work proper continues to prosper all over this island. There is not now so much that is striking in the work, as it is more advanced, and there are not the crowds of heathen giving up heathenism, and putting themselves under Christian instruction, that there were from 1876 and up to 1884 even, but the work is as important, and perhaps more solid. Of course you must expect to be told by missionaries labouring among the heathen, that old customs, and faith in all their former charms, or superstitious ceremonies, cling to the professing Christians for many, many long years, if indeed they ever actually shake themselves entirely clear of them. They may give up practising them to a very large extent, but the faith in these things will cling to them, especially those like the South Sea Islanders, who were savages as well as heathens, for generations: yes, I believe as long as a single native is found on all these islands. "It is bred in the bone, and hard to extract," so says Rev. Joseph Copeland, of Futuna, and like all that gentleman's statements about the natives this remark will stand the closest examination.

We have now thirty-six teachers on Eromanga, five on the other islands—Tanna, Tongoa, Epi and Ambrium—with other missionaries. We have 190 adult church members, and all our teachers, teachers' wives and elders are included in this number. We occupy two-thirds of the island. We have two principal stations, one on the east and the other on the west side of the island. Dillon's Bay on the west was the first and now most thoroughly-equipped station, and where we reside for about eight months of the year; while Port Narevin, or Cook's Landing, is the east and newest station, opened in 1880, and where we reside for about four months of the year. These stations are thirty miles distant, the one from the other, by water, and twenty over the mountains, and it was to enable us the more frequently to visit the east side that induced us to get the horses, and we are now able to go nearly these twenty miles on horseback, though much of the path is very rough, and over high mountains, and through marshy swamps, and we must cross six streams of water between Dillon's Bay and Cook's Landing. We can only take the horses to the principal station, for beyond that we must be content to walk, when the people live inland any distance from the shore, or where there are no boat harbours

to take the boat, and I find I can do the work of visitation much more thoroughly on foot than by boat, as there is no haste about the weather, and no place is passed. We shall never be able to take the horses beyond Cook's Bay on the east side without an outlay of money beyond all benefits to be gained thereby.

Referring to the purchase of a steamer for the mission, Mr. Robertson writes: On account of the very heavy current expenses, we have reluctantly decided to build, or ask the Churches to have built, a sailing vessel of not less than 300 tons, and we have given up the idea of a steamer. But our new vessel will be about twice the size of the present *Dayspring*, and will be thoroughly arranged so as to provide state rooms, or cabins for the mission families, teachers and officers, a good hold for cargo and stores, and being so much larger than the present vessel, missionaries will be able always to get house material, and boats, tanks, etc., from Sydney, besides their supplies and mails. Then we have asked that she be built to sail well—and this is what our present *Dayspring* could never do—and of course she won't make people sea-sick; she won't make those sea-sick who talk about mission work at a safe distance any how—they are quite safe. But all cannot be missionaries more than ministers at home; but that won't relieve any person from his solemn duty to do all in his power to have this world brought to Christ.

Since our return to this isle we have dispensed the sacrament of the Lord's supper three times—twice at Dillon's Bay, and once at Cook's Landing—and we have visited a great deal, taught classes of young men and women, taught a special class for the training of teachers, visited, for a change, the northern islands this year as far as Ambrium, attended the annual missionary meeting in July, held this year on Tanna; conducted a class for church membership, dispensed medicine daily, visited the sick and dying; preached every Sabbath and Wednesday, helped to cut a bridle track across the island, twenty miles, and made three miles of good road; assisted by the natives, I have built a new dining room and pantry, a stable, wharf, two workshops, a boat house, two bridges, made doors and windows, floored our school house, and we have got no less than ten buildings rethatched at the two stations, including our cottage on the east side. These are our mission buildings; that is, all the various buildings needed at a mission station, and do not include our district school houses. Perhaps as many as ten schools have been built since we returned, but only one of these was a plastered building, the others were good, strong, hardwood buildings, covered with thatch. We have also tried to be kind to all traders that called here, and canoe-wrecked natives of Aniwa, and we have shown what attention we could to our missionary brethren and officers of H. M. ships that have been here since our return.

I do regret not being able to write more letters. I have names of dear, kind friends in Canada to whom I earnestly desire to write, and the memory of their houses, churches, manses, studies, offices, and their kind faces and kind words and kind solid assistance makes me ashamed as I read over the list in my memorandum book of names with the words following: "Promised to write regularly on my return to Eromanga." But ah, though my heart is the same to my beloved Canadian friends, what about time? I cannot do more than I am doing, and as it is I work from six a.m. to ten p.m.

It is intended to hold an International Roman Catholic Scientific Congress at Paris, in April. A committee has been making preparations since 1885, being assisted by scholars and scientists throughout the world. The committee on organization includes the Abbes De Broglie and Vigoroux, the geologists Arcelin and De l'Apparent, the Egyptologist Derouge and the Orientalist Deharlez. The object of the congress is to survey the results of modern scientific research, and to attempt to show that there is no discord between the truths of science and the doctrines of revelation as held by the Roman Catholic Church. The lectures to be delivered before the congress include the subjects of natural theology, metaphysics, cosmology, psychology, political economy, social science, physiology, etc. No vote will be taken pledging the congress to any particular theory, and the effect of the meeting will be a moral one as distinguished from an authoritative one. Several non-Catholic French scientists propose to offer papers for consideration.