

paper, says: "The large attendance, the earnest attention, with so little dissent or interruption, in so public and free a place as the most popular theatre in Tokio, gives evidence of a marked advance in favor of Christianity within the space of one short year."

GERMANY.—A manifesto has been published in Berlin, signed by more than 200 evangelical dignitaries, university professors, and others from all parts of Germany, in which an appeal is made for the foundation of a league for the protection of German evangelical interests in the contest with "the increasing power of Rome." The manifesto is a prolix paper, written in very ardent terms. It commences by declaring that the German Evangelical Church and the Fatherland are threatened with serious dangers, owing to the increase of the power of Romanism, due to the concessions it has extorted from the German Governments in the settlement of the Kulturkampf. Its apparent moderation and peacefulness just now are simply assumed for the purpose of gaining more advantages. Protestantism has always suffered the heaviest losses when the hierarchy has succeeded in coming to an understanding with the State. The manifesto urges the settlement of all party quarrels within the Protestant Church, owing to which Protestant Christendom is, it says, in a state of sorrowful disorder in face of the powerful unity of Rome. It also urges the formation of a league, with a central committee and branch associations throughout the whole of Germany, for joint operations against the common enemy.

The Madras clergy have presented Bishop Gell with an address and a sum of money to found a memorial scholarship, in commemoration of the completion of the twenty-fifth year of his episcopate. They say: "When in 1863 your lordship delivered your primary charge, there were in the diocese 38 native clergy and 48,252 native Christians, but now we can speak of 109,875 native Christians, with 124 native clergy, and two bishops specially set apart for missions at their head. To this large native increase, in what is now the Madras Diocese, we ought, for a fair comparison of the present with the past, to add the Bishop of Travancore and Cochin, with his 16 native clergy and 18,206 native Christians, making a total of three bishops, 140 native clergy, and 128,080 native Christians. Bishop Gell was consecrated at Lambeth in 1861. Of the seventeen bishops, excluding the present occupants, who have held Indian sees, only one has ever been spared to see the twenty-fifth anniversary of his consecration—Bishop Wilson, who nearly completed his twenty-six years, only visited England twice.

WALES.—It seems that the recent census taken by a Liberal Nonconformist paper shows an extraordinary measure of strength for the Church. The full results will not be known for some weeks, but three of the towns—viz., St. Asaph, Ruthin, and Denbigh—already indicate the way the wind blows. In St. Asaph the Church has actually a majority of 88 over all the Dissenting congregations. At Ruthin the Nonconformists claim 2,637 and the Church 1,774, or a majority of 863 for the former. At Denbigh, where the newspaper which took the census is published, the Nonconformists claim 5,357 and the Church 2,781, but it is added by our contemporary that in December the total number of Churchmen supposed to be in Denbigh was 1,135. These figures are being assailed by the Welsh Liberationists, who are actually condemning the census of their own agents. Candid people are inquiring why the Nonconformists did not protest before the census was taken, and not after it had been ascertained that the results were so favorable to the Church. Welsh Churchmen do not for one moment affect to deny that in the aggregate Nonconformity is stronger in Wales than the Establishment, but they claim that this census will show that the Church is stronger than the most popular Nonconformist sect in Wales, and that it will reveal a remarkable increase in her strength and popularity with the people.

## SKETCH OF LESSON.

4TH SUNDAY IN LENT.

MARCH 20TH, 1887.

Strength for the Battle.

Passage to be read.—Exodus xvii. 8-16.

Israel journeys on, a vast multitude, some two millions: many unable to get up: the weak and weary fall behind a little in the march: such an easy prey to enemies. These found in Amalek.

I. A Cruel Foe.—This powerful tribe, fierce and cruel, and probably jealous and afraid of Israel—attacks these stragglers (Deut. 17, 18). Moses determines to fight: but not in his own strength: would go and "stand on the hill with the rod of God in his hand" (verse 9).

II. How the Foe was Met.—Joshua was to choose his best men and go down to fight: Moses, Aaron, and Hur go up to pray, and to hold up the rod of God as a banner (verse 15), *Jehovah nissi*—"the Lord my banner." (See marginal reading). While Moses holds this up Israel conquers (verse 11), but Moses cannot do this alone all day, so Aaron and Hur help him (verse 12).

III. The Issue of the Battle.—God is with His people when they trust in Him, which Israel now does, and so Amalek is beaten (verse 13). Israel has learned to overcome God's enemies, even by trusting in God and fighting in his strength. No longer is Israel a weak and helpless people, "for the Lord his God is with him" (Num. xxiii. 21-24; Ps. lxxxix. 18). Moses is commanded to commemorate this victory (verse 14). His prophecy (verse 16) and that of Balaam (Num. xxiv. 8-9); fulfilled (1 Sam. xv. 2-8).

We, too, have a cruel foe. He is called our Adversary (1 St. Peter v. 8). He sometimes attacks us in a cunning, cowardly (2 Cor. ii. 11). We know how he harmed Adam, Eve, David, St. Peter, and others: he began by tempting them: so he tempts us (2 Cor. xi. 3).

We are soldiers of Christ (see Baptismal Service). The Lord Jesus, our Joshua, has chosen us to fight against "Amalek," Satan, the Lord's enemy. But we must put on the whole armour of God (Eph. vi. 13-18) and must "fight manfully under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil unto our life's end,"—"the going down of the sun" (verse 12). Then victory is sure to be ours, (Rom. xvi. 20; 1 St. John iv. 4; 2 Cor. vii. 9; Phil. iv. 13). But without Christ we can do nothing (St. John xv. 5).

[For "Lesson Topics," "Hints to Teachers," and "Explanation of Words and Phrases," see the "TEACHERS' ASSISTANT."]

## Correspondence.

All Letters containing personal allusions will appear over the signature of the writer.

We do not hold ourselves responsible for the opinions of our correspondents.

## LIFE IN THE CHURCH.

SIR,—I think we stand nowhere in greater danger of deadness and formality than in the performance of the Baptismal, Confirmation and Communion offices. The language of the prayer book in these services is so lofty, earnest, and in accord with the Scriptural ideal, that nothing but the reality which comes of faith, can prevent them from being meaningless, and even vain. With earnest believers participating in them, the expressions of the Prayer-book are intelligible and real; but when they are performed by careless ministers, and before indifferent spectators, and participated in by worldly and unconverted people, they are verily a mockery and travesty on true religion. Words the most solemn and profound become hollow and unreal because the spirit is taken out of them by the unbelief of the worshippers. I shall illustrate what I mean by a reference to the Baptismal and Confirmation services. The more I read these services the more I am convinced of the thorough-going faith of the men who compiled them. They were men with lofty ideals. Religious compromise was a thing which they ignored. This 19th century mixture of worldliness and religion was a thing unknown to them; and if they had known it they would have had no sympathy with it whatever. Reality is stamped on everything they did, and everything they wrote. When they said the world, they meant the world. When they talked of renouncing it, they meant it. When they wrote regenerate, they knew what they were saying; and when they said, "Thou hast given unto them forgiveness of all their sins," they believed and expected those confirmed to believe it too. 1 John 2:12. Accordingly the whole of these services is vivid with reality wholly and solely on the supposition of reality in those who participate in them. If the prayers of the people, and holiness and faith of the parents and sponsors is a reality, then the assertion of the priest that the child is regenerate is a reality too; but if the former part of the service is unreal, then the latter part is unreal also. If the answer of the candidate at the confirmation service, "I do!" is the appeal of a good conscience toward God, then the Bishop's to the God who has forgiven them all their sins, is intelligible and real. But if it is the answer of a worldly heart, which has no intention of renouncing the world, then for all the charitable assumption of the prayer, no one will surely deny that the blessing of forgiveness is surely forfeited. What right has anyone to pluck asunder what they have joined together, and to sever lofty consequences from equally lofty conditions. Let us take especially the baptismal service with its strong and long con-

tested assertion. Many believe that the words are misleading, the ideas pernicious, the whole service unscriptural. They would erase the prayer of thanksgiving for the regeneration of the child, and substitute other expressions for the words regenerate, child of God, etc. Now, I believe that from the beginning to the end of the baptismal service the idea is true, and the ideal scriptural, apostolic and perfect. Our Reformers knew what they were about when they compiled that service. They were faithful men; holy men; men led by the spirit of God; men with a spiritual grasp and insight unparalleled from the time of the Apostles, and rarely equalled since; Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, Hooper; men evangelical to the core; converted men; spirit in dwelt and spirit-taught men. Think not that such men would have countenanced anything in the Church of God which was not grounded on most certain warranty of Scripture, and in perfect accord with the purpose and will of God. They were true believers; they believed God. They believed in the power and efficacy of prayer; they believed that in answer to the prayer of faith, the same promise of forgiveness, and the Spirit which the parent claimed for himself might be claimed for his children. They believed that it was the will of God that the children of Christian parents should be heirs of the promise, within the covenant, and therefore as heirs of the promise, entitled to the sign and seal of the covenant; and so true and mighty was their faith that they believed that when the ordinance of baptism is received rightly, as the 27th Article puts it, and only rightly—for upon this supposition all the expressions are intelligible; but when it is not rightly received, that is, not in faith, these expressions are mystery and misleading. The promises of the forgiveness of sins, and our adoption to the sons of God by the Holy Ghost are visibly signed and sealed, and the fulness of the blessing belongs to the child. We must ever remember that the expressions of the Prayer-book are incomprehensible unless we realize that they were drawn up by the men of faith, in an age when faith when it was found was true faith. I can fancy one approaching the venerable Hooper, or the godly Latimer, and saying, "Do you really believe that this child just baptized, is regenerate, and God's own child?" Believe! would have been the astonished answer; believe? Do you think I am mocking God? Have we not prayed again and again even eight times, that God would give His Holy Spirit and His blessing to this child, and shall we doubt that God who blessed the children of Abraham and their seed, and the children of all His believing people of old, who filled John the Baptist with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, and made Timothy faithful from a babe—has not also favorably received this child and given Him His Holy Spirit? No, no; I believe in God; I believe in prayer; I believe in taking God at His word; I believe that when we ask in faith He does answer, and therefore we say, "We yield thee most hearty thanks, that it has pleased Thee to regenerate this infant."

The whole service, we repeat, was drawn up upon one supposition, and that is the supposition of faith. Where faith is, the service is scriptural and intelligible. Where faith is wanting, the service is worthless, empty, unreal, nay, a mockery and travesty on true religion. Faith primarily in the parents who bring their children to baptism as holy because the child of believers, or at least of one believing parent—1 Cor. 7, 14. Faith next in the parents, sponsors, clergyman and congregation. For just as the household of Lydia, the jailer at Philippi, Stephanus, Crispius, were baptized on account of the faith and covenant standing of the parents, so it is with our children. Therefore the solemnities and the safeguards of the service. Therefore the care taken that prayer shall always precede (see even the private baptism rubric!) Therefore the questions to parents and sponsors! Therefore the reiterated supplications! In fact everything in the service goes to show that every safeguard and precaution that human wisdom could suggest is here provided to preserve the service from abuse and misuse on the part of ignorant and careless. How solemn and heart-searching those questions to the sponsors. How impossible would it be—were the service clothed with reality—for any unconverted or worldly man or woman to act as sponsor to a child. Nothing can exceed in solemnity these questions. It seems as if the church calls for a pause. Stop! Consider! Lest there be any mistake, I will ask, Dost thou in the name of this child renounce the world? Dost thou believe? Dost thou? thou? It is all of faith—all of faith. And we believe that where true faith is found there the fulness of the blessing is found. This we believe to be the intention and meaning of the teaching of the Church. But where faith is not, there is no blessing. There may have been the baptism of the water, but there has not been the baptism of the Spirit. Where true faith is there the sign and seal of the promise of the Spirit are assuredly real. Then the baptism of the water is a true sign that the baptism of the Spirit is given also. Ah! for faith to believe that God surely gives to the infant the very same blessing that He gives to the believing parent,

and that God give the baptism of water is faithful faithfulness (there newness

No, no! L. Prayer Book. requirements generation? modate it to! Shall we desert or abandon we say, these them really believing, let ough-going fa God forbid. Shall we n the standard pressions of t fill men with men in Chris utterance of most mercifu generate this but the than ing God can life.

SIR,—Miss treasurer's d ing of the bo 1886. So-an missions, &c mentioning.

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SIR,—T. of smoke" can tell wi years. In it is the di