

THE RELIGIOUS STATE OF FRANCE AND THE McALL MISSION.

BY REV. R. M. SAILLENS, PARIS, FRANCE.

I. THE position occupied by France during the last three centuries in the religious world is one of peculiar interest. France was, before the Reformation, the stronghold of the Papacy, "the eldest daughter of the Church." It was here that the movement of the Crusades originated; here, also, that the monkish orders, for the most part, were created and had their greater success. From this fair land the Holy See drew the larger part of its revenue. It is no wonder, therefore, that when the "heresy" broke out, the Church put forth her most strenuous efforts to retain France in her obedience. She spared nothing in the endeavor, and she succeeded, by the acuteness and cruelty of a pope's niece, Catharine de Medicis, and of her wretched sons. But she succeeded only in a measure. Protestantism was vanquished, but not destroyed, as it was in Spain, Italy and Flanders. It remained as a thorn in the flesh of kings and popes; it remained as a leaven, which silently but surely worked the whole nation into a new spirit; it remained as a check upon the clergy, which never was able to recover its former power in this country, and has ever been obliged to watch over its own members, the ignorance and immorality of whom were proverbial before the Reformation.

The action of Protestantism has been more direct still. In the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church movements have been produced which owed their origin to the influence of the gospel. Such men as Pascal, Arnaud and Fénelon could not have arisen in a land wholly given up to popish rule. Unconsciously to themselves, the Jansenists were the timid, but true, successors of the Reformers. Pascal wrote his *Pensées* and his *Provinciales* by the light which the Huguenot martyrs had kindled.

Another result of the French Reformation was the Revolution of 1789. That great event might be defined: *the fruit of Protestant seed fallen in Papist soil*. There was in it a strange association of the spirit of liberty with the spirit of fanaticism, as if Loyola and Voltaire had combined in the effort. Jacobinism is the name which history has given to that monstrous combination. But all that was good in that glorious and dramatic movement can be traced back to the gospel influence. The father of the Revolution, Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose writings did more than any others to prepare and inspire it, was a Protestant. The man who began to sound the alarm, and was the first to set his timid hand against the old edifice, Necker, was also a Protestant.* Alas! that Protestantism should have been so weakly repre-

* He was a Protestant also, the man whose very name recalls the Reign of Terror, and who seemed to have been born for that day of bloodshed and revenge—Marat. Such are the lessons of history!