

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

EVANGELIZATION IN FRANCE.

There are several agencies at work at present in France in addition to the missionary societies of the French Protestant Church, all sowing the seed of the Gospel, and quickening and deepening the widespread influence for good in many ways. Amongst these may be mentioned the well known work of Mr. McAl, that of Miss de Broen, that of the Wesleys, and that of the Salvation Army under the devoted daughter of Mr. Booth. But before referring more particularly to these, I shall give the readers of THE PRESBYTERIAN a brief account of the three Home Mission Societies the "Société Evangelique de France," the "Société Centrale d'Evangelisation," and the "Mission In Cœur" confining this letter to a short sketch of the first of these, the

EVANGELICAL SOCIETY OF FRANCE.

This society was founded in 1833, shortly after the Revolution which had freed France from the bondage of the old Bourbons. The committee which directs the operations of this society is constituted on the basis of the Evangelical Alliance, nine of its members belonging to the Reformed Church, four to the Lutheran, and seven to the Free Church. It is therefore free from sectarianism, and confines its operations chiefly to those portions of France from which Protestantism was eradicated by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, seeking to kindle afresh the light of the Gospel in the darkest parts of the country. A most interesting work is being carried on in the central districts of France, particularly in the Creuse, a Department which, a few years ago, did not contain a single Protestant. This and the adjoining Departments have of late years been the scene of an important movement, which has been most fruitful in its results. This has been largely due to the labours of a Mons. Hirsch, the converted son of a Jewish rabbi—a young man of great mental vigour, and full of zeal and devotion. This young missionary now devotes much of his time to work in Paris, where he assists not only M. Armand Delille, but also Mr. McAl. Being full of life and activity, he does not confine himself exclusively to any one sphere of labour, but, like a genuine missionary, visits all parts of the country where his services are most needed. And everywhere he manifests consummate tact in bringing the influence of the Gospel to bear upon the hearts and lives of his hearers.

This society, after gathering together converts, forms them into churches, either under the care of the Established or Free Church, as the case may be, the people being left quite free to choose the denomination to which they wish to attach themselves. The moral and physical good wrought by the society in different parts of France have been considerable, even when direct spiritual effects have not been apparent. When it began its work in the Haute Vienne, there were several villages notorious for the drunken habits of the people, and the frequency of lawsuits amongst them. These same villages are now said to be models of order and peacefulness, and this Department, once noted for the ignorance of its inhabitants, now occupies a respectable position as regards educational attainments. The last time I heard the late Dr. George Fisch plead the cause of this society, of which he had taken a fatherly charge from its very commencement, he said that it had attained its forty-seventh anniversary the previous year, and that, by a curious coincidence, they had added to the field of labour forty seven new under-stations, bringing the total number up to 163.

The liberty to preach at present is such that there is perhaps not one of the 38,000 townships of France where the missionaries of this society would be refused a hearing. Only men and means are wanting to increase the number of stations to almost any extent. On the occasion referred to above, Dr. Fisch said that fifteen years before the Department of the Creuse contained only ten Protestants, who had arrived from other parts of the country, and at the time he spoke, through the labours of the Evangelical Society, there existed sixty-one stations or sub-stations, where the Gospel was preached with more or less regularity. 500 families were in the habit of reading the Scriptures. It was here and in the neighbouring Department of Correze that Mons. Hirsch made such a marked impression on the people, establishing in the

space of three weeks Protestant worship in thirteen of the principal towns. The following incidents will illustrate the tact and judgment of this zealous young missionary. They are taken from his reports: One day, being in an omnibus, a lady sitting opposite to him began to upbraid him with going from place to place, stirring up the hearts of the people against the Roman Catholic Church. He tried to explain to her the reasons which led him thus to labour for the conversion of souls, and in parting offered her a New Testament, which she refused, saying that being Protestant, it was falsified. He discovered her address, and regularly sent her tracts, and again a New Testament, which she sent back, but three months afterwards accepted. Some time passed, and M. Hirsch received a letter saying that the person who had been so uncivil to him in the omnibus wished to see him, as she was dying. He immediately obeyed the summons. She told him she now knew he was not an "ouvrier d'iniquité," as she had previously styled him. To her husband (a freethinker), her friends, and the priest who offered to administer the last sacraments, she said, "I have ceased to be a Roman Catholic, and have become a Christian," and passed away in perfect peace. In a certain town the missionary had been assailed by a group of bigoted women, and one of them—a lady of rank—had been so much excited by her priest, that, after a hot discussion with M. Hirsch, she took him by his overcoat and spat at him. He answered: "You see how needful it is that the Gospel should civilize this country, for no woman in heathen lands would behave towards a missionary as you did." Before leaving her, he added, "Remember, however, that Christ died for your sins." M. Hirsch went to his hotel. Soon afterwards a young gentleman came in and asked whether the "Protestant" was there. He approached M. Hirsch and said: "Why did you say to my mother that Christ died for her sins?" "I say it also to you," replied the missionary, "because it is true for all." "Well, my mother asks you to come and repeat it to her." Very soon M. Hirsch was in the castle where the lady lived. She asked him, "Who told you that Jesus had died for my sins?" "The Gospel; this Gospel of which you said this morning it was taught by the priest every Sunday." "I never had understood it. Oh, read to me these Gospel words." The missionary read and explained the promises of God. Then the husband of the lady came and told her: "You see that your conduct has at last become public." M. Hirsch said: "I have never known any wrong of your lady, but what I told her I say to you also. Yes, the Lord died for your sins." "Oh, if I was quite sure of it?" "Let us ask God to give you this assurance," said M. Hirsch. They knelt down, and she who had uttered innumerable prayers, prayed then for the first time. She wept bitterly, and when she rose, said, "I have prayed this time." M. Hirsch left, and some time after received the following letter: "What my husband told you was only too true. I lived a few days more in that shade, which my confessor knew and condemned. But something new took place in my heart. I felt you had not been placed in my way without a purpose. I repeated to myself that Jesus had died for me; but I shrank before the sacrifices which His Word imposes upon those who will possess its benefit. My sin was stronger than myself; but two months ago, while I was kneeling in prayer, I learned from my Lord that His grace was stronger than my sin. From that time I felt delivered. I threw myself at the feet of my husband. Together we have prayed and wept. We did not like to write to you before having walked resolutely in the new path. How sweet it is to be with the Saviour! and in spite of the sayings of my venerable priest, I feel that *all* my sin is pardoned. It was red as crimson, and has become white as snow." The husband added these few lines: "Let us pray to God together. He answered your prayer; He gave me His peace; He gave me back my dear wife. Let us forgive, as God forgives." T. H.

Paris, January 31st, 1882.

TWISTED DOCTRINE.

MR. EDITOR,—In your issue of January 13th there is a criticism (on an article by the Rev. R. C. Moffat, headed "A Twisted Doctrine," by a gentleman signing himself "M. T.") I have waited patiently, hoping that Mr. Moffat or some one like him, who is able,

would have answered it; but as no one has, I therefore take the liberty of sending these lines to you, hoping that you will find a place for them, so that Mr. "M. T." or any other may give me some light on the matter. 1st. Our grand old Presbyterian standards are attacked; and 2nd, he has made a positive statement of a third place for disembodied spirits, and I know not where to find it in God's Word. He says he believes, "1st, in the soul entering into rest and blessedness; 2nd, to have full communion with Christ after death, but that is not glory; and 3rd, when Jesus died His spirit went to the place where are the spirits of the perfected just, and not to heaven." I want to know where this third place is, and what is its name, and where are the Scripture proofs. Let us look at his assertions one by one. He says that it takes considerable twisting of Scripture to prove that the soul at death does immediately pass into glory. Now, Mr. Moffat just quoted the grand old Catechism; and if "M. T." had put himself to the trouble of reading the question, he surely could have had no doubt about what it means, as it says nothing about *full* glory. It only distinctly states what happens to the soul and what happens to the body. Mr. Moffat was not proving what amount of happiness or glory the soul would enjoy, for the point of his article was the consciousness of the soul between death and judgment.

But let us look at "M. T.'s" exposition of the Scripture proofs of the soul passing immediately into glory. He commences with Heb. xii. 22, 23, and with one bold stroke of the imagination he declares it irrelevant. He quotes, "But you are come unto Mount Zion," etc., and this is spoken of believers in the flesh, and not what shall come to them at death. That may be true; but let him take the last clause of verse 23, "and to the spirits of just men made perfect." I wonder if "M. T." has met many of these in the flesh. If he has, I have not, nor have I ever met the Presbyterian who has. Therefore, it is not in the flesh that they are to be met, but in heaven. Paul tells us (Phil. iii. 12) that he had not already attained to perfection. Again, 2 Cor. v. 1, "For we know," etc. "M. T." states that this passage has no reference whatever to the state of the soul between death and the resurrection. If it has not, what was the apostle talking about? Was it the soul or was it the body? And what does the word "dissolved" mean? Also, what was to occupy the "building of God?" whether was it the soul or the body? I want him to explain this verse, and not do as too many do—go from one thing to another, and you are no wiser when they have finished than when they began. In John xiv. 2, 3, Jesus says, "I go to prepare a place for you," and this was in His Father's house. This house is not made with hands, and no stronger language could be used than what is used in the 8th verse. The apostle was both confident and willing that death should take place, that his soul might be present with the Lord. Also, Phil. i. 23. Now, what was he in a strait about? Was it not for his soul to be immediately with Christ, whilst his body would return to dust? And wherever Christ was, Paul expected to be there as soon as his body would be dissolved.

The last passage he takes is the Lord's words to the penitent thief. On this passage he states positively that neither the Lord nor the thief went to heaven. If Jesus did not go to heaven, where was His Father when He committed His soul into His hands (Luke xxiii. 46)? and did the death of Christ separate His soul or body from His Divine nature (see 1 Peter iii. 18, and Rev. i. 18)? And where did Stephen see Jesus, and into whose hands did he commit his soul (Acts vii. 56, 59)? Also, what is the meaning of John iii. 13: "Even the Son of man, which is in heaven?" and where was His human soul during the part of three days that His body lay in the tomb. Also, where was both body and soul during the forty days, with the exception of the eleven times He showed Himself to His disciples? I think he has some hard work with these passages before he has twisted out of them either a new patent Presbyterian sleeping-car, or a new purgatory where unconsciousness reigns supreme. But as his trouble seems to be mostly with the word "glory," we ask does the word "glory" in a biblical sense mean the presence of God—the manifestations of the blessed in heaven? And if this is glory, do God's people not enjoy a share of it, even in this world? Take John xvii. 22: "And the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have (not I will) given them;" 2 Cor. iii. 18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass