

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

EVANGELIZATION IN FRANCE.

A week or two ago I received from Pastor Lorriaux, the general agent of the Central Missionary Society of the Reformed Protestant Church of France, a long letter, giving full details of the work done during the last three months. Having already made your readers acquainted with the origin and special objects of this Society, it may be well to state, in a condensed form, the substance of his letter, to keep them *au courant* with missionary operations in France, its difficulties, needs, and successes.

After expressing gratitude for blessings received, and for the progress made during the past year, a determination is expressed to persevere in the work commenced, taking as a motto "We shall maintain." And this resolution is based on the fact that it was the Master Himself who had inclined the Society to begin operations, and who has always visibly sustained them. They "will maintain" the ground gained, because the Reformed Church, whose auxiliary and offspring the Society is, reckons on their assistance, and commands them to fight by its side. The posts they occupy were taken in the Church's name. All the agents seek out and gather into groups dispersed Protestants, who, without such efforts, would be lost to the Church, and, what is worse, would be without any religious service, and would soon lose all sense of religious life. The Society could not to-day abandon one of their stations without weakening the Church in that district, and without rendering the ministry of the regular pastor of the parish either impossible or overwhelming. It must be borne in mind that there are some

PARISHES

which comprehend one, two, three, and even as many as four, Departments! Take, for example, that of Oise, the Department in which Calvin was born. In the whole of that immense district of country there is but one official pastor. (Pastors acknowledged and endowed by the State are called *official* in France.) And yet there are groups of Protestants, more or less numerous, in seven towns in this Department, and in twenty other localities. No wonder, then, that the two agents of the Society—the one at Beauvais and the one at St. Just—are both overwhelmed with work, half of their time being spent in travelling. And yet in addition, they have to supply an "official" station which has been for some months vacant. Mr. Lorriaux says that, while assisting one of these agents lately at St. Just, he was interested in seeing an old woman, after the morning service, come up and ask permission to sign the register of adherents to the Reformed faith, which she did in the following words: "I, the undersigned, born at Quincampoix, the 25th September, 1818, declare, in presence of Pastor L., that I separate myself from the Roman Catholic Church, after mature deliberation, and attach myself to the Reformed Evangelical Church." Here was an aged woman, who had the courage to break with the convictions of a long life, and to embrace what she had hitherto regarded as heretical views. At the same time, a man, one of the most respected citizens of the place, signed the same register, after making a similar declaration. No wonder he was interested in the result of his visit. Again at another station—Quincampoix—a distance of three or four miles from St. Just, he met in the afternoon of the same day more than one hundred persons, with the Mayor of the village at their head. The Mayor, it seems, is a very regular attendant at the services, and often goes to St. Just on occasions when services are held there. After the meeting several almanacs (Protestant) were bought from the colporteur, who distributed at the same time numerous tracts. The Mayor sent his carriage to take Mr. L., back to St. Just, and after expressing his gratitude to the Society for carrying the light of the Gospel to his village and the surrounding country, said at parting, "We need moral and religious men to give an example to our population." In the evening the agent at St. Just told Mr. L. of meeting at Mouchy-Saint-Eloi a venerable couple, the husband eighty-five and the wife eighty-two, who, in a short time, had lost four children, but who had been sustained by faith in Christ, and being the only Protestants in the place, they were testifying to the hope that was in them, and waiting in profound peace, the hour of their

own departure, rejoicing that, at the time of their burial, the words of life and immortality in Christ would be spoken to their fellow-citizens. I omitted to say that at the morning service a man from Monbiers, more than eight miles from St. Just, approached Mr. L., and asked permission to send the proceeds of a collection made spontaneously by the converts at his village for the benefit of the Central Society. He was told that gifts, amounting to 250 francs, had already been sent from the same locality to the stations at St. Just, a pretty good sign that these converts were in earnest. So much for the Oise. Let us now select the Department of

LOT,

in the south. The Protestants of Cahors in this Department were visited some time ago by a pastor from Montauban, a distance of some sixty-three miles. During his stay he was invited to preach the Gospel at Concorde, a village a little farther off. In consequence, a religious movement took place and developed; and the pastor of Caussade, nearly the same distance off as Montauban, came to the assistance of his colleague. A congregation was organized, and a pastor settled at Concorde, who, in addition, supplies Cahors, and finds opportunities to pay occasional visits to the scattered Protestants of Lot, bearing the light of the Gospel wherever it is demanded. A new temple has been built at Concorde, and recently opened—one lady (Madame Marracci) contributing ten thousand francs. Other sums were sent from the United States, this being one of the places visited by the Rev. Mr. Newell a year or two ago, and for which he promised assistance. In the Department of

SAÔNE ET LOIRE

there is but one official pastor, and yet Protestants are found scattered at intervals all through it. The pastor is helped by only two agents, placed at different points, and two colporteurs. Again, in the Department of

NIEVRE,

a vast province, there is not a single pastor of the Reformed Church, while, scattered over it, are at least one thousand Protestants, old and new. The same may be said of the Indre, and many other Departments. All

THE AGENTS

of the Society provide religious services for the scattered Protestants, so far as circumstances will permit, and for such Roman Catholics as manifest any desire to listen to the Gospel. They all work harmoniously with the Consistories and the pastors, and lean decidedly to the evangelical section of the Reformed Church, or, as the French say, to the "Synodal Organization." Forty-two stations of the Central Society have become regularly State-constituted churches, and are no longer dependent on the funds of the Society. At the present time, Mr. Lorriaux tells me, there are at least an equal number ready to enter the official family, but for several years the State has located no new parishes. In consequence of this, for each new work undertaken, fresh resources have to be found, so that the expenses of the Society have gone on increasing from year to year, until last year they rose to the sum of 249,443 francs. The Central Committee of Paris alone spent last year 139,650 francs, double the amount of any year during the last ten.

The Society began this year with 150 agents, who attend to 360 stations. They maintain also sixty schools, and various works of beneficence both in France and in Algeria. Dependent on the Society also are two preparatory schools of theology, that at Battignolles, Paris, with thirty students, and that at Tournon in the south, at which also there are thirty students. After leaving these schools the young men prosecute their studies, either at the Theological Faculty of Paris, or at that of Montauban.

Mr. Lorriaux says that the mayor of a Commune, which he recently visited, said to him, on parting, "With some good and true

HUGUENOTS

in each locality, the principles of morality, family life, and respect for religion, would rise vastly, and France would be saved." Yes, France is now reaping the fruit of what she sowed in former days. The Huguenots were banished as malefactors from the land which they were enriching by their industry, and ennobling by their conduct, and carried with them to the lands in which they received an asylum, those "principles of morality, family life, and respect for religion" which are now needed, according to this rural

mayor, to save their fatherland from political anarchy and social disorganization. Well would it be for France if her politicians generally entertained the views expressed by the mayor of this little Commune.

T. H.

Dresden, Germany, 27th Feb., 1883.

"APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION AND THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS."

BY REV. T. P. FOTHERINGHAM, M.A., ST. JOHN, N.B.

(Concluded.)

They tell us that bishops, presbyters, and deacons are essential to every congregation (*ad Trall.* 3); the bishop is not to neglect the widows, he is to assemble the congregation frequently and seek after all by name, not despising male and female slaves (*ad Polycarp* 4); the bishop offers up the public prayers in the congregation, and the bishop and the presbyters convene the congregation (*ad Ephes.* 20); nothing can be done in the Church without the bishop (*ad Trall.* 2); without him it is not lawful either to baptize or to celebrate the eucharist; and wherever he shall appear there the multitude is to assemble (*ad Smyrn.* 8). Each bishop, then, had but one altar and one congregation. What diocesan of the present day could perform all these duties? Yet they are just what thousands of Presbyterian pastor-bishops are performing week by week. They are purely pastoral duties. In all the seven epistles we find not a word about confirmation or ordination, and nothing is affirmed of the bishop that is not perfectly consistent with the strictest equality between him and the presbyters. Indeed the favourite comparison of Ignatius is with the Sanhedrim, the presbyters being the members and the bishop the president, and it is well known that no distinction of rank obtained between the president of the Sanhedrim and its members. Whether then the evidence of the Ignatian epistles pertains to the first or the third century, they testify simply to presbyter-bishops.

The writings of the remaining apostolic Fathers contain nothing pertinent to our subject.

It is impossible to over-estimate the value of the evidence here adduced. These were men who heard the truth from the lips of the apostles, who were living during the organization of the primitive Churches, who had doubtless received many directions orally which have not been preserved to our time. So far as uninspired testimony is concerned this is of the very highest order, and moreover being unwittingly given when writing on subjects only remotely referring to Church government, indicating what was the condition of things acquiesced in without question, it is difficult to conceive what stronger argument could be framed. It is, moreover, all the evidence of a contemporary character that can be obtained. Not one word remains to us from any writer of the first century, nor is it ever after hinted by anyone that such did ever exist, which contradicts the united testimony of Clement, Polycarp, and Ignatius. Have we not a right, then, to claim that, seeking our principles in the Word of God, we find ourselves walking in the "old paths" of the apostolic Fathers, and the "good way" of the primitive Church.

The chain of apostolic, or more properly of episcopal, succession lacks, then, its first links. It is not enough that the name "bishop" be found. This title every minister of the Presbyterian Church claims. He only is a bishop, in the medieval and modern sense of the word—the sense contended for by all advocates of the divine right of episcopacy—who possesses the exclusive power of confirmation, ordination, and government. The question is really diocesan *versus* parochial episcopacy. Presbyterians do not deny that in the early Church one presbyter presided as *primus inter pares*, "where many are equal in dignity—one only can occupy the first place" (*Cicero, Pro Murena*); but we deny that he occupied this position as being of a higher order, and executing, *jure divino*, higher functions. Some writers eagerly seize upon almost every sentence in which the word "bishop" occurs, and then exultingly exclaim, "Here is the germ of what we are defending!" It matters not to them whether their author defines the functions of the episcopate or not—the name is sufficient, and then they turn to us and solemnly remind us of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. "One would think," says Jamieson, "that at the beginning they plead only for as good as nothing; and that the thing they would have is no bigger than the cloud which was like a