

Religious Intelligence.

BOHEMIA.

The Protestant Church at Prague.

(To the Editor of *Evangelical Christendom*.)

Dear Sir,—I forward you a letter I have received from Pastor Kossuth, of Prague. Before I left England, I heard that a good work was going on in that city; and during my stay in Austria and Hungary, I made many inquiries respecting it, and received a very favourable impression of it. Having arranged to spend a Sunday in Prague, I inquired of the persons in the hotel in that place, if they knew Pastor Kossuth. The reply was, that he was a good man, and a great orator; and that, through his means, many Catholics were becoming Protestants.

I was much struck with his place of worship. It is a large upper room; a ball-room, in fact, in the neighbourhood of what would be called, in England, tea-gardens. It was filled with a congregation of attentive and devout worshippers, from seven to eight hundred in number; and, what is very unusual on the Continent, the afternoon congregation was equally good. I wanted to see him after the service, and was much pleased to see the affection with which he was greeted by many of his congregation.

On conversing with him, I found him to be an earnest and fervent man; in personal appearance, not unlike Luther. From all I could gather, he appears to me to be raised up for a great work. Many Roman Catholics flock to hear him; and every month, during the last year, some have renounced Romanism; some months, as many as thirty and forty have done so. Two priests have recently been among the number. While we thus see Romish superstition giving way on the Continent, is it not a sad and mortifying reflection that in some quarters it should be making progress among ourselves? What a triumph to the Romanist, and stumbling-block to the inquiring, it is, to read from time to time in the newspapers that this and the other English nobleman and clergyman have joined the church of Rome! Not the careless and the illiterate, but men of thought and education!

I asked Pastor Kossuth if he had any intercourse with the Jews in this neighbourhood. He told me that he has always some of them attending his ministry; that he has baptised several, who have since their baptism walked consistently; and that he has refused to baptise some others, believing them to be not yet truly converted in heart.

But I need detain you no longer, as his letter will speak for itself; I will therefore only add my earnest hope that Christians may aid and encourage him in his work.

I am, dear Sir, truly yours,

RIDLEY H. HERSHELL.

London, September, 1850.

Respected Sir, and beloved Brother in Jesus Christ,—When you were at Prague, I promised to send you, ere long, some particulars respecting the state of our church in this place, but have hitherto been prevented fulfilling my word. You recollect I was wishing to make a journey to Leipzig, in order to open subscriptions for the benefit of this church; but, quite unexpectedly, insuperable obstacles were thrown in my way, and I found I must relinquish my plan. A passport was refused me; while every means of annoying and oppressing both myself and my people were put into requisition. Such are the difficulties with which we have to contend. But the Lord will not forsake us.

I will now give you a slight sketch of the origin and formation of the communion to which I belong, as also of its present state and future prospects, begging you at the same time to let it appear in England, in those parts of English hearts may be interested in the statement we make, and not refuse us the success which in our need we look for from them.

The Bohemian Evangelical communion of Prague first existed as a society in 1847. The toleration law, indeed, was passed by the Austrian Government in 1781, but it remained unavailable to them, in consequence of its containing a clause which required 500 persons to constitute a church;

a number they were quite unable to muster. The members, therefore, remained destitute of a pastor, and unorganised as a church, till the year 1846, when they received permission to form themselves into a community; and the first time Divine service was celebrated among them at Prague, was the first Sunday in Lent of 1847, when I had the privilege of officiating. The people engaged a dancing room for their place of worship, and in it, with overflowing hearts, listened to the preaching of the cross, and had their souls nourished by and built up in the good word of the Gospel of Christ.—It was a despised and feeble band that assembled in that hired room; by the world they were oppressed, by many laughed to scorn; some hated, others persecuted them;—cast out they were by all. In obscurity the little company lived on; I was their first pastor, accepting their invitation because I felt strong enough in the Lord to take part with them in their afflictions, and share the opprobrium they endured from the world.

With the religious liberty of 1848, a new life seemed to animate our struggling church; I was now at liberty to preach the Gospel freely, in opposition to human systems, superstition, pharisaism, free-thinking, and the silly fables current all around.—The number of my hearers increased every week, so that the roomy apartment was no longer large enough to contain them, for "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." For two long centuries no man had dared openly to preach the blessed Gospel of the grace of God, and now the famished people fainted for "the living bread." The total inability of persecution, oppression, and all the cunning schemes of Jesuit cruelty, to repress the ardent longing of these souls for Gospel truth is clearly seen in the frequent accession of disaffected Romanists to the Protestant church. Three hundred such persons have already joined us. I have with my own hands administered baptism to two of Abraham's sons; and but very recently two Catholic priests have cast in their lot amongst us. All this has served to engage the watchful attention of both clergy and Government, who eagerly avail themselves of every opportunity that may come in their way to annoy us.

But this is a subject I must not enter upon, as it would swell this letter far beyond its prescribed limits. One instance I may, however, mention, for by it they thought to give Protestantism its death-blow in Prague. I refer to their endeavour to take from us the room in which we had worshipped so long, and their project succeeded; but the mercy of God was mightier than our weakness. We gathered up our little remaining strength, and, though without money, ventured in faith to purchase an old church, trusting in the Lord that he would open benevolent hearts, and raise up generous benefactors, it might even be in foreign lands, to espouse our righteous cause. Thus, looking above, we bought the church for 27,500 silver gulden—300 of which we are engaged to pay annually; we are unable to do so alone, but trust our brethren will aid us.

To the partakers with us of the common faith, to our brethren in England, we turn and earnestly implore their assistance.—Will you help us to build a house of God, in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ may be fully preached,—in which believers may be established in the faith,—in which, the darkness being excluded, the true light may shine? We are unhappy, persecuted, afflicted brethren who address ourselves to you, and our only desire is a house of prayer, some hallowed spot where we may worship the Father of heaven in peace, where, through the blessing of God on the ministry of the word, we may be "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." The cause we advocate, and for which we contend, is the Lord's; it is the object of all our efforts; for this we labour, suffer, patiently endure the trials which come upon us daily.

Still many hundreds in Prague might be gained to the side of truth if we had this church, for the great—persons of standing in society—who would have blushed to enter our social meetings in a room, will come

to church. The ground to be cultivated is very good, and it cannot be that the seed of the word should prove fruitless. We hope, and I trust not in vain, that this church shall stand in Prague a lasting monument of the generous liberality you have exercised towards the oppressed, while you have in your own hearts the happy consciousness of having aided the proclamation of the Gospel of peace in this benighted city. God Almighty, in whose name we began this good work, grant his own blessing upon it, bless you all with temporal and eternal benedictions.

FRIEDRICH WILHELM KOSSUTH,
Protestant Minister at Prague.

N. B.—I entreat you, my dear brother, to insert this in some English paper, and do all that lays in your power to help us.—Write to me soon, acknowledging the receipt, and tell me if I could not appeal to the Queen of England, or if you could not intercede for me. I anxiously look for a reply, and commend you to the grace of the Lord.

Prague, Sept. 12th, 1850.

Family Circle.

For the Wesleyan.

Extract from a Letter addressed to Parents on the Loss of an Only Child.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—I cannot describe to you how much we were shocked and grieved at the mournful intelligence that your letter conveyed. So sudden, so unexpected was the stroke, that I feel it very, very hard to realize that dear little A. is numbered among the dead. Deeply, deeply do we sympathise in your sorrow, and, though absent from you, in spirit we mingle our tears together, for yours is no ordinary loss. An only child, one so richly endowed with personal attractions, and sweetness of disposition,—and who gave rich promise of future years, so suddenly to be snatched from your embraces, to be taken from the home of which she was the light and life,—and laid in the cold and silent tomb, is indeed grief, which none but those who have experienced it, can fully sympathise with. I know, my dear friends, from sad experience, how coldly the words of consolation fall upon the bleeding heart, how it refuses to be comforted,—but yet I rejoice to believe that "Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal,"—and fain would I endeavour to mitigate, in some measure, though I may not remove your grief, by reminding you of the blessedness of her whom now you mourn. Oh, my dear friends, your loss is her eternal gain,—and though I grieve with you, I may not grieve for her. No, my darling little A., though so dearly loved, I may not wish you back, earth's joys and sorrows to share. He, who gathereth the lambs in his bosom, hath led you to greener pastures, and by the side of stiller waters; pastures whose verdure is unfading, streams never ruffled by tempests. Oh, my dear friends, could you for one moment draw back the curtain that hides the future from the view, could you know what sorrow and trial might have been the portion of your beloved child had she remained longer on earth; how often she might have exclaimed, as most persons at some time or other, even those whose lives have glided calmly on, have done, "Would that I had died when young," you would feel consoled, even in the bitterness of your sorrow, that "tears are forever wiped away from her eyes." And, oh if you were privileged to ask her would she wish to return to earth, what, think you, would be her answer.—Ah from those mansions bright, no eye regretful views its earthly dwelling; no heart ever yearns to mingle again in its scenes, and though, doubtless, your dear A. remembers and loves you with a love even purer and intenser than that of earth, yet, on the bosom of her Father and her God, she calmly waits for the time when her spirit shall welcome yours, to her blest abode on high. Oh, what more could you wish for her? Would your fond hearts have been secured for her wealth? she is now a partaker of "treasures that wax not old, eternal in the heavens." Did you ask for her pleasure? She dwelleth in "a land of pure delight." Were you solicitous that

she should mingle on earth with those distinguished for mental and moral attainments? Her society is that of angels, archangels, and those blest spirits of whom the world was not worthy,—and, more than all, she is numbered among those little ones "who do always behold the face of their Father who is in Heaven." Oh, think, and let it mitigate your grief, that you could not desire for her more happiness than she now possesses.—I know how fondly you anticipated shielding her tender years from sorrow,—but, ah, how often are the fondest hopes blighted; and, perchance, you might have been called away, and she left, early in life, without your tender care, to the coldness of a world, that has, indeed, but little happiness to bestow. But she is safe. She shall not weep in bitterness over your graves; her heart shall not bleed, as, one by one, earthly ties are severed; that brow will remain forever unstamped by care,—and the voice, that had but learned to lip its parents' name, is now tuned to melodies in heaven. Oh, could but one note from that celestial song fall upon your ears; could your eyes, now dimmed with weeping, be permitted to gaze, for one moment, on the ecstatic glories of the upper world, surely grief would be turned to rejoicing,—and in beholding the bliss of your child, you would forget your own loss. But though this may not be, "what thou know'st not now, thou shalt know hereafter," for

"Stricken friends
Are Angels sent, on errands full of love,
For us they languish,—and for us they die."

Oh, my dear friends, she was not yours; she was only lent to you for a season, and now your heavenly Father has reclaimed his own. Do you murmur at his will? Perhaps he saw that you were placing all your affections upon her,—and, in mercy, recalled the gift, lest you forget the giver. Oh then, while you are not forbidden to weep, let your grief be chastened, by the remembrance of the hand that hath dealt the blow, not in anger, but in love, who never wilfully afflicts the children of men.

Holy Wives and Mothers.

We have already observed, in describing the spread of Christianity, where we adduced the testimony of Pagans themselves, as unimpeachable evidence of the fact, that pious Christian females, presenting patterns of genuine wives and mothers, often furnished a beautiful contrast to the prevailing depravation of manners and reckless pursuit of earthly things to be found in the families of Pagans, or of mere nominal Christians. From such wives and mothers, the true religious instruction of the husband, or at least the pious education of the children, often proceeded. By them the first seeds of Christianity were planted in the souls of those who afterwards produced great effects as teachers of the church. The pious Nonna, by her prayers and the silent influence of the religion which shone through her life, gradually won over to the Gospel her husband Gregory, who had belonged to an unchristian sect, and he became a devoted bishop. Their first-born son, whom they had long yearned after, was carried, soon after his birth, to the altar of the church, where they placed a volume of the Gospels in his hands, and dedicated him to the service of the Lord. The example of a pious education, and his early consecration, first received from his mother, of which he was often reminded, made a deep impression on the son; and he compares his mother to Hannah, who consecrated Samuel to God. This impression abode upon him while exposed, during the years of his youth, which he spent at Athens, to the contagion of the Paganism which there prevailed. This son, the distinguished church-teacher Gregory of Nazianzen, says of his mother, that her emotion, when dwelling on the historical facts connected with her faith, overcame all sense of pain from her own sufferings; hence, on a festival day she was never known to be sorrowful, and death surprised her while praying before the altar.

The pious Antusia, of Antioch, retired from the bustle of the world, to which she belonged by her condition, into the still retreat of domestic life. Having lost her husband at the age of twenty, from regard to his memory, and a desire to devote herself