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Statue of Admiral Coligny in Paris.
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FOREIGN AID SOCIETY.

Established in 1840 for helping the Reformed Churches to extend the knowledge of the Gospel on the Continent of Europe.

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THE FOREIGN AID SOCIETY ASSISTS WITH GRANTS TO:

1.—Société Évangélique de Genève.—A missionary society working principally in the south-western provinces of France.

2.—Société Évangélique de France, which works chiefly in Paris and the centre of France.

3.—Société Centrale Protestant d’Évangélisation, with its some 137 mission stations scattered all over France.

4.—Société Chrétienne Protestant du Nord.—A branch of the above.

5.—Société Évangélique Belge, which for sixty years has faithfully worked in Belgium.

6.—Les Églises, Libres, who are chiefly engaged in the South of France.

A Combine Much to be Applauded.
A NEW FRANCE.

The papers have lately announced the advent of a New France. The term is at least picturesque. Whether it is also true remains to be seen. It remains also to be seen in what direction and with what complexion this "newness of life" is to appear in France. Gifted, brilliant and highly sensitive, France is the land of surprises, and a New France is by no means impossible. To insist Pharasaically on the need for renovation may easily be resented by a people that has always been peculiarly jealous of her rights in matters of taste and in intellectual transformation.

I do not, therefore, venture to preach to Frenchmen the duty of making a new France; nor do I presume to intrude upon the domain of their domestic developments. To me the term "A New France" denotes not a political or social renovation so much as a religious one.

We here enter a region common to all men and all nations. There are no lines of limitation here. On the broad area of religion all men are equal, and everyone has his right to be heard if he can speak with competent knowledge and sympathetic insight. The religious question is not to be dismissed from the view of national renovation. Its place there is large and dominant. To offer helpful suggestion in this matter is to make a solid contribution to that change within which is the root and raison d'être of a new France.

Is it possible to imagine what a New France would really be like? Is there any new role for her to play which France has not already assumed? To bristle with bayonets from the Mediterranean to the English Channel; to muster regiments of brave and disciplined soldiers; would not be a new sight there. She has too often courted victory or defeat for that to make her title good as a New France. She has tried every sort of philosophy and every type of art and letters. There is nothing new under the sun in that way for France.

But has she ever given the Reformed Faith a fair chance? Would she not be indeed a new France if she became genuinely and collectively evangelical? Such a transformation once had in her history an approximate realisation. A generation after the rise of the Protestant movement the Huguenots numbered more than one-third of the people of France.

Before the Reformation she was Gallican in her conception of Christianity, and her attitude was a strong support of the liberties of the Church threatened perpetually by the grasping avarice of the Italian Curia and the Roman Papacy. After the Reformation she showed that she was capable of initiating a religious experiment on a grand scale when from her bosom she evolved the Jansenists. These are historic preludes and warrants of her capacity for great religious movements. But neither Gallican nor Huguenot nor Jansenist ever actually acquired the spiritual ascendant in France.
A New France, therefore, in religion is still to seek—is, let us pray, still to come. In the sphere of religion she can yet perform a silent and salutary revolution which would make her claim to being new indeed, in the sense of St. Paul's phrase, valid and glorious.

Signs are not wanting that such an inward renewal is on its way. From the oracle of French philosophy a voice is heard, penetrating and authentic, calling the young generation of Frenchmen to retrace their steps from the muck and murk of materialism to a world of thought pure and elevated.

Bergsen has spoken and France has heard his voice. He has told his hearers that "Spirit, Freedom, Individuality," are the supreme truths of the universe; that man is not the slave of a chain of causes bound about him by matter to which he must yield, and in so yielding is void of praise or blame. This message is not the Gospel; it is not even a gospel; but it is a message that can prepare the way for a reception of the claims of the Gospel. We hail it with profound thankfulness, and augur from it a change of mind in the French people which may lead on to yet higher changes.

From the leaders of literature, too, voices are heard in harmony with M. Bergsen's appeal. M. Merle d'Aubigné, in a recent address, made the following quotations from three contemporary writers of eminence in the French literary world:

"M. Brunetière, one of the first of French literary critics, writing in the year 1899 on the failure of science, said 'Belief is as inherent and essential to the human soul as breath is to the human body.' M. Brunetière had for many years professed agnostic and materialist opinions."

"M. Paul Bourget wrote in 1890: 'As for me, this long enquiry into the moral diseases of France constrains me to recognise that, both for the individual and Society, Christianity is at present the absolute condition for health and recovery.' M. Bourget was in his youth one of the most brilliant disciples of Renan, the sceptic."

"Pierre Loti, in his recent book describing his visit to Jerusalem, when gazing at a group of kneeling pilgrims, he exclaimed: 'Oh! to believe—oh! to pray—when the end is near—as these do! For Christ, whatever men may think, or men may do, is the Unique, the One that cannot be explained; and to my friends I would say, "Seek ye Him: try, oh, try to find Him! Outside of Him there is nothing."' M. Loti, though bred in a Protestant and Christian home, has renounced his early training."

I venture to hope that the readers of this quarterly will ponder over this article with prayerful interest, and will allow it to stimulate their efforts on behalf of evangelisation in France.

We are often discouraged by what we hear; let us sometimes copy the example of the great Apostle, who, when he approached the city of Rome in all her majesty of power and wickedness, and was greeted by a tiny deputation of Christian brethren without rank or riches coming to meet him, a captive, "thanked God and took courage."

NOTES FROM MANY QUARTERS.

THE SOCIETY AND LORD RADSTOCK.

The strange action which issued in the removal of our honoured Chairman, the Rev. Ewart Barter, from Grosvenor Chapel, compelled the Committee to seek for a place of meeting in the future, since the Grosvenor Chapel, which had for a long time been kindly placed at
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their disposal by Mr. Barter, was no longer available.

They accordingly took counsel and agreed to make an application to Lord Radstock as one of the Trustees of the Conference Hall, in Eccleston Street, S.W. This hall is conveniently situated with respect to Victoria Station, from which it is distant only a few minutes’ walk. It is, moreover, associated with many forms of Christian activity, and is roomy and commodious. The Committee felt that if his Lordship would grant them his leave to meet there, they would be in a position of advantage.

They wrote to Lord Radstock and made their request. He replied in a very kind letter and placed the hall at the disposal of the Committee for their meetings on very simple and reasonable terms; and the Committee met in the new quarters for the first time in February.

We offer here publicly to Lord Radstock our thanks as a Society for his kindness in co-operating with us in the work of God on the Continent, a work in which he has taken for many years not only a deep interest but also a practical and influential part.

We trust that his lordship’s health, which has given some anxiety to his family of late, is gradually being restored to its wonted vigour.

The last thing our Chairman did before leaving Grosvenor Chapel was to give a portion of a substantial offertory to the funds of the Foreign Aid Society. He sent a sum of £5 11s. 5d., in addition to the offertory which he had already given quite recently when the Secretary preached in the chapel on Advent Sunday. The combined gifts amounted to a sum of more than £15. We are the grateful debtors of Mr. Barter for this generous and touching recollection of the work.

We hear with deep regret and much sympathy that Captain the Hon. C. H. Hampden, who has long served on our Committee, continues to be very ill and suffers much. We are sure that his many friends will share the regret that the Committee has felt and has expressed to him.

The following notice appeared in the Daily Telegraph last month, and will be read with interest. The Secretary brought the matter before the Committee, and at their request has written to Dr. Willoughby, placing before him the claims of the Foreign Aid Society in connection with Miss Alcock’s bequest. Dr. Willoughby has replied in cordial and sympathetic terms, and we hope that the Society may derive assistance from the generous legacy. Miss Alcock was well known and widely appreciated as a writer of Protestant stories. Her sound knowledge and forceful style made her books a telling contribution to the cause of Evangelical Truth. She has wished that her work shall live after her, and we shall be thankful to become partakers of the inheritance.

"Miss Deborah Alcock, aged 71, of 1, Bohemia Road, St. Leonards-on-Sea, daughter of the late Rev. John Alcock, Archdeacon of Waterford, who left estate valued at £9,726, bequeathed £2,000 to be invested in the names of George Maynard, of Hawkhurst, Kent; Anne Richardson, of Westfield Cottage, Hampstead; and Rev. Dr. Willoughby, vicar of St. Luke’s, Hampstead, upon trust to apply the income from one moiety thereof annually in the propagation of the principles of evangelical religion in the Roman Catholic countries of Europe, and to apply the income annually from the other moiety for the promotion of education in the British Empire in the history and principles of the Protestant faith."
Meeting at Chislehurst.

A meeting for the Society was held in the parish hall of Christ Church, Chislehurst, on the afternoon of February 20th. There was a good attendance. The chair was kindly occupied by the Vicar, the Rev. G. H. Pole, a member of our Committee, and Mr. Theodore Howard, a veteran leader in many good works, also took part. The Chairman, in opening the proceedings, reviewed very clearly and ably the present state of religion in Europe, and pointed to some signs which, amid many that were dark, offered some hopes for spiritual improvement. He impressed on the meeting the importance of English churchpeople taking the full share in the work of spreading the Gospel in the neighbouring land of France, to which we all owe so much in so many ways.

He reminded us of our spiritual privileges as children of the Reformation, and commended the Society as an instrument ready to our hand for giving effect to our duty in this respect. The Secretary then gave an address on "The Prospects of Spiritual Religion in Europe." The collection amounted to £4 17s. 6d.

The Society is specially indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Howard for their zeal and labour in getting up this meeting, and also to Mr. Pole for his kindness in placing his charming hall at the services of the Society free of charge. The financial result of the meeting was most satisfactory, some new subscribers having been won over to the work and much interest aroused.

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The following most interesting letter from Pasteur M. Merle d'Aubigne, written to the Secretary for the meeting, was read at Chislehurst, and will be read with deep and not unhopeful pleasure by all who are intelligently concerned for the welfare of France. These indications are like straws that show the direction of the wind of doctrine blowing over the mental life of the Continent. I have written more at length on this matter in the leading article.

"Dear Mr. Marston,—In answer to your letter which I have received this moment, I cannot give you better information on the subject indicated than that contained in the first part of my article in last Gospel Echoes, "The Religious Condition of France."

"There is, I believe, distinctly in France a return to religion among the higher classes. You will see indications of this in the said article. I have nothing to add to it except this: Last Sunday a young fellow, who is studying at the 'École Polytechnique,' a college in which no one can get except he be a tip-top mathematician, something like a 'senior wrangler,' declared to me that he had lost his faith in consequence of scientific reasoning, but now felt he needed the Christian faith. When I asked him what had influenced him, he said, 'The example of my fellow students, who are all earnest (Roman Catholic) Christians.' This is entirely new, and marks an enormous change in public opinion in the intellectual class.

"See also Gaston Riou's (a Protestant) 'Ame écoute de la France qui vient' (B. Giasset, 61, Rue des Saints Peres, Paris), fr. 3.50.

"I wish you much success in your efforts on our behalf. We (the Société Centrale) have just closed the year without a deficit. We are pushing forward our Home (Itinerating) Mission as vigorously as possible, and have just engaged a fifth and very eminent itinerating preacher and lecturer, M. Drulemann. We need help more than ever!

"Yours very sincerely,

"M. Merle d'Aubigne."
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FORTHCOMING MEETINGS.

The Annual Meeting of the Society has been fixed for the month of June. The actual date is not yet settled. The speaker will be the Rev. W. P. Parker, English Chaplain at Calais, who, from his intimate knowledge of the French character and language, is well qualified for the task of interesting us further on behalf of our French brethren.

A meeting of the Foreign Aid Society will, we hope, be held at Clifton some time in April. The secretaries there hope to be able to secure the Vicar, the Rev. H. L. de Caudole, to preside at the meeting.

By the kind invitation of the Rev. Walter Abbot, Vicar of Christ Church, Anerley, a meeting for the Society will be held in his parish during the month of May. The Vicar of Penge, the Rev. W. Smyly, has kindly expressed sympathy with this meeting, and we hope that the Rev. J. W. Atkin and the Rev. Mr. Latham will co-operate in the effort.

THE BENEDICTINE EXODUS.

Fed on Roman Food.

At the end of February the Benedictines of Caldey seceded to Rome. Of sixty-four members, four only held to the Church of England. Profoundly as we differ from the opinions which even these four must hold; yet we respect their determination to be loyal to their National Church. Whether any membership of a Roman brotherhood is compatible with such loyalty is a question on which they plainly differ from us. We think not. "In reality," said one of the brethren in a letter to the Abbot as long ago as last Lent, "the Community has been brought up on Roman Catholic food; therefore, our Breviary, Missal, and devotional books contain doctrines which are not compatible with the teaching of the Church of England. We have borrowed practically everything we have from the Roman Church."

The ideal of a brotherhood community may not be incompatible with the strongest Protestantism. But the Benedictine Order was founded under Roman supremacy, and has developed on Roman lines. Its history and traditions are Romish, and all who join such a society cannot but find it a pedagogue to lead their footsteps to Rome. In its history and progress they will glory. They will assimilate its traditions and its doctrines. Roman foundlings, fed on Roman food, sooner or later they will fancy Rome their proper home.

Wide as its limits are—how many think too wide!—the Church of England cannot permit doctrines and practices such as were forbidden at Caldey to have place in the corporate actions of a properly recognised community within its discipline. But the English Church forces no consciences, and secession from it, or sectarianism within it, nothing can justify. The Roman Church, on the contrary, so forces consciences as to make it impossible for those, to whom the light of Evangelical truth has dawned, to remain in their communion; and while denouncing our work in bringing that light to the souls whom they have left in the dark, leave no stone unturned to win seceders in England to their sect.
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The following quotation from the new German periodical "Die Eiche," by Pastor Siegmund-Schultze, translated by J. H. R., deserves to be widely read. We, therefore, venture to reprint it here.

"Allow then, German brethren, a brief sacrificial celebration beneath the shadow of the oak. Permit the oak for a few minutes to become our altar, and its rustling the voice of those fathomless depths in which are the springs of our power:

"We are fostering friendly relations between Great Britain and Germany, not as dilettanti in politics, but because we are under obligation to establish the Kingdom of God.

"We work for this friendship, not because we think thereby to establish friendship throughout the whole world, but because the word of Jesus applies to a definite body of men: 'Ye are my friends.'

"We emphasize relationship of race, not as zealots for an anti-national brotherhood of man, but because 'if any man saith, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.'

"We abhor bloodshed between these two peoples, not because we would see no more blood in the 20th century, but because we have always before our eyes that Blood, which would reconcile the enmity of the world.

"We work for peace, not because eternal peace must now come, but because the field of our Lord is white unto harvest, and the Lord needs labourers in His harvest.

"We love peace, not because we would gladly live in comfort and apart from strife, but because the 'peacemakers' shall be called children of God.

"May He, whose cradle-song was 'Peace on earth,' that this heavenly music might penetrate into the hearts of men: may He, who after His exaltation greeted His own with 'Peace be with you,' that they might bring this greeting as a good news to all peoples in all the world: may He, of Whom disciples testify 'He is our peace'; may He who came as 'Prince of peace' accomplish His own purposes through human history, the King of His messengers of peace!"

THE STRUGGLE IN BELGIUM.

We hear with sympathetic concern of the financial difficulties of the Missionary Church of Belgium. M. Kennedy Anet writes an importunate appeal for help in this time of need. The Church is a living and busy one. It has many stations of useful activity in Belgium itself, a country which is dominated by the black Catholic party, and is also honeycombed with Infidelity and devoured with what is politely called alcoholism, or the fever of drink, and its attendant vices.

The same Church has its agents in the mission field—good men and women, full of the love of Christ and of souls, striving in the Congo regions to counteract the evils of Belgian misrule there, and to teach the poor inhabitants the better way of love and salvation.

I would that these lines may reach the eye of some Christian friend of Belgium who may be able and willing to send me help, to be remitted to M. K. Anet in this jubilee year of the Church in Belgium.

The Editor.