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GERMAN PRESBYTERIANISM IN THE NORTH-WEST.

What is the result of the migration of the German people to the north-west? The German people, eager to settle upon their own soil, rich land, their willow industry and economy are well known to them, and will give them future influence. It is their custom, as many of them in the West will testify, to settle in communities of their own, and to foster themselves by their own hands. There they settle and grow, building up, as it were, their own German States for themselves, as in the old country. Any one familiar with the religious condition of the emigrating class in Germany, will not need to be told that they bring little evangelical religion with them, and that when religion most of all is needed, they are the least likely to be found. In the city of Milwaukee there are about fifteen or twenty thousand; in Chicago, perhaps, an equal number. Nearly one-third of the population of Wisconsin is said to be German. In the northern third of Iowa there are about twenty-five thousand. There are, besides, large settlements of them farther down in the State, especially along the Des Moines river. In Dubuque we have five thousand; in Davenport between three and four thousand. The town of Guttenberg, on the Mississippi, forty miles above Dubuque, has a population of about five thousand, almost wholly German, where little other speech than their language is heard.

There are scattered among these communities a number of Roush churches, and a smaller proportion of Lutherans. Very many of the people are infidel Free thinkers, but a large number of these are so only because they know no better. The Romanists among them are less superstitious than most other Papists, and the Free-thinkers are generally willing to hear and discuss the truth; though, of course, there is much opposition to the gospel to be found everywhere in their midst. Now, among these people, especially in Wisconsin and Northern Iowa, extending also partially to Northern Illinois, Southern Iowa, and a part of Minnesota, a decisive effort has been made to extend the gospel through the aid of our Eastern Presbyterian brethren, and so far with a satisfactory result, and so we believe, with an efficiency and success equal to the average of our missionary work among our own population. The Congregationalists have also done something, and the Methodists still more towards the same end—as also the German Reformed.

For some years a soldier in his native country, he afterwards learned a trade, and came to America that he might support himself by it. He had been instructed thoroughly in the sound Calvinism of the Dutch Church, and was, as he believed, devoted to God through the power of the Holy Spirit. In 1849 he was led, in the providence of God, to Platteville, Wisconsin, where was a settlement of Germans. There were then no German Presbyterians in the whole region. Desirous of doing what he could for religion, he went about in his spare hours distributing tracts, and talking with the people upon their duty to serve God. After a year the people became anxious to have preaching among them, and a young man, a candidate for the ministry, was sent to them. He was a promising and sincere laborer, but much tainted with Arminianism. Mr. Van Vliet conversed much with him, and as he seemed desirous of learning the truth, the latter agreed to instruct him in the doctrine, by a study of the Scriptures together. The scholar came and sat by the teacher as he sat at his daily work, and was much with him in the evening, and upon the Sabbath, until he was thoroughly instructed in sound doctrine. After some time a church was organized in Platteville, under the care of the Congregationalists. In the meantime, Mr. Van Vliet had been studying the German language, and speaking it

thirty truly converted members might be established there. They were very anxious to have a minister, but he had none to send them. Ministers enough could be had from abroad; but the experience of the churches in that such are, in most cases, not only unevangelical, but uncomprehending and unchristian. Now it is to be noticed that this work has been sustained by the Board of Education, in assisting in the preparation of students; by the Board of Domestic Missions, in assisting in sustaining them as ministers; and they have drawn very lightly upon it; by the Board of Church Extension, in completing their houses of worship; and by the Board of Publication, in giving them tracts, and books, and hymns, and above all, the Confession of Faith in their own language. So here is found a practical proof, both of the need and of the efficiency of our Church machinery.

Mr. Van Vliet sat at once that the great want for this work was sound and evangelical ministry; and as soon as he was settled in Dubuque, he began to look around for pious and capable young men among the Germans, whom he might instruct for the ministry. Of course, material was scarce in so limited a membership; but he succeeded, from year to year, in finding a few who had love for the students from the lead them to engage in study for this end, and who gave fair promise of usefulness. He received them into his own house, boarding them at cost, for one dollar to one dollar and fifty cents per week for all expenses. He has thus spent a good deal of himself in this work. The Board of Education, in the recommendation of our Presbyterian brethren, has been very kind, and has put twenty more men into the field, who could not be secured from abroad, were it not for the conviction that we are better without any who are not thoroughly educated in our doctrine, and who do not love our system. But who prefer to wait until we can get those who alone we believe will be useful.

I know that I will be met here by the objection that we ought to send English ministers among them, and preach to them in English, which they will have to learn at last. But if we do, we will have to postpone the work to another generation; for those who emigrate do not themselves, as a class, ever learn our language so as to be able to understand preaching in it. Thus all who emigrate, as long as emigration lasts, though it be for a century, will be divided among our missionary laborers, and the work of the second generation will not learn English with any degree of thoroughness, especially where there are large settlements of their countrymen. I am informed by a German, in whom I have confidence, that there are nearly whole counties in Pennsylvania, where little else is spoken than German, and that the rising generation. If this should be an exaggerated statement, yet that there are many such large communities we all know. To those we must send the gospel in their own tongue, or not at all. When our foreign missionaries enter upon their fields, their first work is to learn the language of the country; and we know how hard it is for the English to learn the language of the Atlantic to the Pacific—yet, will you not bolt the globe—and that along it, at this very moment, flash with the speed of thought, messages between San Francisco and New York. We can even see the wire vibrating under the weight of some momentous intelligence. In no other achievement of the human genius has man so fully attained the divinity of his origin, and proved himself the possessor of a soul "immortal as the sky."

In Des Moines, as is too often the case in our large western towns, the masses are untouched by the influences of the gospel here. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, never cross the threshold of a church, and never hear a gospel sermon. They are very shadows of our churches. Can anything be done to reach and reclaim them? Most they are left without an effort for their salvation? How the plan would work, I know not, but I have wished for years that, in our larger towns, we could have on the Sabbath street-preaching, or preaching in some of our public halls, at a certain hour. Is not the plan, with a trial?

The usual variety of churches is found in Des Moines—Methodist, Congregational, Baptist, Episcopal, and "Old" and "New" Presbyterian. All of these, I believe, have neat and commodious houses of worship. The Episcopal church, of which the Rev. Dr. Peet is pastor, is said to be large and flourishing. The New school Presbyterian church, of which the Rev. Mr. Bird has for several years been the pastor, appears to be prospering. I do not think it particularly creditable to the town that the Romanists are erecting a fine building, much after the cathedral style. How these followers of the man of sin, or should shame us in their devotion, and in their fidelity to their God? It is right to be taught by an enemy. And we are thus taught, but how little does the teaching profit?

Onward to Des Moines. In closing this long article, I would state that the statistical and personal information contained herein has been obtained mostly from Mr. Van Vliet himself, whose modesty would forbid the appearance of his name at all, did not your correspondent deem it necessary, as authority for these statements. It regards other matters here contained, I shall be glad to be corrected, if wrong, by some one on the field, who has had equal opportunities of observation and information, and a better judgment in the matter. I leave this cause with God and his Church, praying that this good work may be steadfastly and earnestly advanced, and that friends may be raised up for its assistance. HAWKERS.