

LETTER FROM REV. C. H. SPURGEON.

The Crisis now in Europe and America viewed Religiously—Demand upon Earnest Christians.

TO THE EDITORS OF CHRISTIAN WATCHMAN AND REFLECTOR:

DEAR BRETHREN,—Upon the minds of many in this land who have the spirit of discernment in an eminent degree, there is just now a gloomy foreboding of some catastrophe at hand. I must confess that I share in their conviction, if not in their fear. In the order of nature the harvest is followed by the vintage, and hitherto there has been an almost uniform analogy between nature and grace. The harvest we have had, and you have enjoyed it even to a greater degree than ourselves. And what if these days of revivals are to be succeeded by great tribulation and sore distress? Does not the ingathering of the elect always precede the visitation of sinful nations with woe and wrath? If the apprehension be unfounded, it is certainly not absurd, and is worthy of some little regard. Every man in England must have perceived the universal expectation of some great war which is stirring up many to the preparation of carnal weapons, and others to the use of nobler arms. It were useless to indicate the various forms which our apprehensions assume, but I write what can be right well proven, when I assure you that in many of our hearts there is the silence of suspense until some fresh vial be poured out, or the glorious kingdom be hastened. We wait in anxious prayer, crying with David, "O Lord, how long."

Let not our hearts be troubled even should the worst of our fears be realized, for the falling of nations is but the establishment of the church. These things are shaken, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. The crash of empires and the devastation of nations have been the whirlwind in which "the Lord hath his way," and the fearful desolations of cities have been the thick clouds which are the dust of His feet. We are anxious concerning the events of the future, for we are human; we are not in doubt with regard to the final result, for our faith is Divine. Perhaps the worst in the judgment of reason, will prove in the end to be the best. "Things are not what they seem." Should our glorious nations, of whose liberty and civilization we are mutually proud, should these be subjugated by tyrannic power, would not the principles which they embody be scattered all the more widely by the banishment of our citizens throughout the world? Might not the wind which rent up the old plant, bear on its wings the seeds of a thousand others which should fall where never that good grain had grown before? If it should ever come to pass in some black day that our happy Christian fellowships in England and America should feel the fire of persecution, or know the terrors of invasion, in what respect would our Redeemer's kingdom suffer? Might not this be the sharp physic for our ecclesiastical diseases? A purge for our heresies? A stimulant for our sloth? If we will not go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature of our own voluntary will, we need not marvel if one day we are scourged into it. If we will not ride forth among the nations in the chariot of peace to carry the glad tidings, it may be that the King of kings will sling us forth with the sling of war or persecution, that we may be as a burdensome stone among all nations.

You will probably imagine that I am in a very

sling of war or persecution, that we may be as a burdensome stone among all nations.

You will probably imagine that I am in a very nervous condition, and you will remind me that such fears are idle in your new world. Now against this kind suggestion I beg to enter my protest, for my temperament is rather sanguine than desponding; indeed, the inward peace which I enjoy at this moment is a fully sufficient contradiction to your supposition of any trembling in my nerves. Moreover, I am not sure that you have any cause for boasting that your mountain stands firm and can never be moved, for if you may not dread calamity from without, you have a certain black and abominable cancer within, which may well cause you serious alarm. The dangers of nations lie in their sins, and both the old country and the new have a full measure of iniquity to answer for. Other nations may go unpunished because they have not our light and knowledge, and therefore God winketh at their sins of ignorance, but of us the Lord may well say, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." Surely you are not so blind a lover of your republic as to hold her guiltless, while before the entire world she scourges her helpless captives, and makes merchandise of the flesh of men. No, my friends, we may alike expect the chastening of the Lord upon our fellow-citizens; for the lands are defiled by our iniquity against God and the oppression of men. May we have the seal in our foreheads, and thus escape the trial which shall come upon all the earth.

If there be no solid ground for the previous remarks, you will at least agree with the practical conclusion towards which I am hastening. Let the reapers arise and thrust in the sickle with renewed vigor, for the sky is lowering, and a storm may soon compel them to cease from their joyous labors. Good husbandmen are anxious to house their corn before the rain comes on; let us be instant in season and out of season for the ingathering of the Lord's precious wheat. Here I call to remembrance the earnest "words to the winners of souls," which have lately been printed for private circulation among our ministers, and which deserve to be published over the wide world. I quote a passage meriting your solemn attention:

"The infusion of new life into the ministry ought to be the object of more direct and special effort, as well as of more united and fervent prayer. To the students, the preachers, the ministers of our churches, the prayers of Christians ought to be more largely directed. It is a **LIVING** ministry that we need, and without such a ministry we cannot long escape

the judgments of God. WE NEED MEN THAT WILL SPEND AND BE SPENT—THAT WILL LABOR AND PRAY—THAT WILL WATCH AND WEED FOR SOULS."

Melchior Adam tells a notable story of Myconius, the friend of Zwingli and Luther. On the night of his entrance into the monastery, in order to assume the condition of a monk, he had a dream which changed his whole history, and led him to devote his energies to the cause of Christ. He was led in his dream to the fountain of living water which flows from the wounds of the crucified Saviour, and being washed and refreshed, a guide conducted him to a boundless plain covered with waving corn. Here he was bidden to reap. "I cannot," he cried, "for I am unskilled in the use of the sickle." "What thou knowest not thou shalt learn," was the swift reply. The guide conducted him nearer to the scene of labor, and there he saw a solitary reaper toiling with such prodigious effort, that he seemed determined to reap the whole field himself. He is commanded to join this laborer and share his toils. Anon, he is led to a hill from which he sees the vast extent of the field, and wondering, asks how long it will take to reap such a field with so few laborers. His guide answered, "Before winter the last sickle must be thrust in. Proceed with all your might, the Lord of the harvest will send forth more laborers soon." Myconius toiled until, weary and faint, he attempted to rest a little, but the Crucified One, all wan, weary and wasted, appeared to him, and spake in his ear, saying, "As I am you must be." Then he awoke, but the dream remained with him, he took his place by Luther's side, and worked until reapers arose on every hand, and the harvest was all reaped before the winter. Such dreams may we all have, for verily this is but a picture of our own day. There are a few men laboring like giants, performing feats of ministry, but why should they stand alone. Let us join them, let us be diligent in this all-important business. The fields are vast, the harvest waves, the end approaches, and through grace let us go forth with our sickles, never to rest till God himself shall bid us lie down and die. O, to die preaching! To leap into heaven from our pulpits! To fall with our shield upon our arm! If this be an object of desire, let us live in daily exercise of our calling, and we shall never die out of it. Our age should be a time of strenuous, ceaseless, persevering effort. We must not walk but run, nay, we must press forward towards the mark. Let us crowd all our canvas on, stretch every nerve, strain every muscle, and haste to do our Master's will. Time is always short, but revival times are the shortest of all. After every flood-tide there comes an ebb; the tide will soon turn; O let us be active, and above measure laborious, while the flood of grace is flowing in. NOW OR NEVER, is the cry of these times to the earnest sons of the church. 'Tis ours to bring upon the churches a long and fearful drought by provoking God with our apathy and indifference, or rather it is ours to bring down a glorious blessing which shall make the desert rejoice and the wilderness blossom as the rose. Looking for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,

I am, my dear friends,

Yours in Jesus,

C. H. SPURGEON.

[Since the above letter was in type we have another from Mr. Spurgeon in which he refers to his late visit to Dublin. This letter will have a place in our next week's issue.]