

INCREASE OF CRIME.

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves [selfish], covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." – 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

While on the one hand it must be conceded by all that we live in a day preeminent for its benevolent institutions and reformatory measures, reaching even to the care of the dumb animals as well as the human kind; though it is a day of large salaries to favorite preachers, and large donations for church buildings and other purposes, yet on the other hand it is a day of increase of crime and of decrease of vital interest in godly things, as ably summed up in the last statement of the apostle quoted above; outwardly there is a form of piety – actually it is merely a benevolence and morality inspired by the increase of general intelligence.

Brother Brookman sends us the following extract on this subject, which may be read with interest as showing the increase of crime in one short year, 1884. If the contrast were for a longer period, say between the years 1884 and 1854, the increase of crime shown would be much more startling. It runs thus: –

"One of the leading journals, which is in full accord with the popular belief that all things are making rapid progress in the right direction, publishes the following statement of the murders and suicides committed in this country in 1884 as compared with 1883: –

"The statistics of crime in this country for the year just closed are in some respects quite startling. For instance, the murders foot up

3,377, against 1,494 in 1883 – an increase of more than 5 per day. The number of executions for murder during the year was 111, only 5 more than in the year preceding; but it is proper to add that public sentiment did something toward the correction of this discrepancy between the number of killings and the number of hangings by applying lynch law to 219 murderers, against 92 thus disposed of in 1883. In the matter of suicides the showing is equally remarkable, the cases for 1884 numbering 1,897, against 910 during 1883. These statistics are not complete, of course, but they are nearly enough so to demonstrate that the past year was, for reasons of some kind, peculiarly given to the taking of human life by violent means.'

"Of course it does not suit the purpose of the optimists to dwell upon tables like this, and, so far as observed, not the slightest notice has been taken of it in any periodical of any kind. But notwithstanding the silence, the fact remains, and is worthy of at least passing thought. It is natural and easy to close the eyes to that which is disagreeable, but whether it is always wise to do so is quite another question. One of the strongest denominations in the land boasts of building a new meeting-house every day in the year, but when there are five more murders every day for the entire year than during the preceding year, and more than twice as many suicides as during the previous twelve months, it is obvious that a great many more meeting-houses are needed, and far greater Christian effort, if this were the remedy. Five thousand two hundred and seventy-four murders and suicides in a single year, out of a population of fifty millions of free and enlightened American citizens, will give one such astounding crime to about ten [R847 : page 5] thousand inhabitants; and it is difficult to reconcile this with the oft-repeated statement that there are more than ten millions of evangelical Christians in the United States, that is to say, that, leaving out the little children, one out of every two or three is a church-going and devout believer.

"It is hard also to reconcile this astonishing power of the Church with the tidings, coming from every quarter, of increasing discontent

and fierce hate and threatened violence on the part of those known as 'working men,' who constitute a large majority of the population in the cities and principal towns and mining districts. In many places they are drilling with fire-arms under efficient officers, so that when the next general 'strike' occurs, they will be prepared to resist force by force. The most of those whose eye may rest for a moment upon telegraphic dispatches in the daily papers, announcing such murderous intent, dismiss the subject without a thought, or smile at the impotent folly of attempting a Socialistic revolution in this happy land of liberty and plenty. Alas! how little they know of human nature, and of what man can become when unrestrained by the fear or love of God.

"Information from Russia shows that the Nihilists, in addition to the use of dynamite, have resolved to try the efficacy of poison, and all the officials of the vast empire have been put upon their guard against the employment of servants, who are not proved to be thoroughly trustworthy. Men of high station dare not receive their food or drink from any but known or sworn friends. The London *Times*, which ought to take 'cheerful views of things,' closes a long editorial on the deplorable condition of affairs in Asia, Africa, and South America, with the following statements concerning Russia and other countries of Europe: –

"Meanwhile its financial embarrassments grow yearly more intense; its public works are costly and unremunerative; its popular privileges are perpetually being restricted; its Minister of the Interior cannot quit his house, unless as the centre of a phalanx of policemen; Nihilism rears its poisonous head in every class, and the Czar demeans himself as if he were a State prisoner. Germany idolizes its Emperor and its Chancellor, yet a troop of assassins is convicted of having been compassing the death of the one in the very crisis of national loyalty, and the Imperial Parliament denies to the other the official assistance which his health demands, and he condescends to entreat. The German Empire is the most splendid political structure in Europe; and huge masses of its people exclaim that it is starving them. Austria has been

menaced with a panic, the result of individual breaches of commercial faith. It is terrorized by nests of anarchists at war with society, and willing to snatch at any private plunder in their way. Italy is so little grateful for its extraordinary national redemption that a section of its sons may venture, unreprieved, to glorify the memory of a murderer whose only excuse for the crime of butchery broad-cast could be that he was a lunatic. Norway is in a condition of chronic protest against its Government. The Parliamentary state of Denmark is a confusion which would be portentous if it were not permanent. Belgium is ruled by an Administration which is not national. Great Britain sees its trade depressed, and is warned by a host of self-constituted prophets that the edifice is about to come down with a run. It knows that it has to struggle with Transatlantic Dynamite Funds, with the responsibility for Ireland, and bewildering arithmetical problems of proportional representation. Spain and Portugal are enjoying an interval of calm, though it is impossible to say it is not the lull which precedes a storm.'

"Having said so much the writer is not content. His very next sentence is even more suggestive still. For he sums it all up adding, 'We have only skimmed the surface.' Full well he knows that deep down beneath the surface there are volcanic forces slowly yet surely gathering, which threaten devastation of Christendom, if not of the world. Over all the nations of Europe the miasm of infidelity has been stealthily spreading and strengthening; paralyzing everywhere not faith alone, but also hope and love. For wherever faith dies there also hope and love ceases to live. When these three graces are extinguished, who shall predict the force of the wildness and wickedness which must then surely take the field?

"Politicians, who are intent only on the game of diplomacy, refuse to take warning. The real danger of the day is the growing ungodliness of the great masses in our cities, our large towns, and even in our villages. *The one remedy*, if it be yet available, is *the restoration of belief.*"

The writer of the foregoing sees something of the facts, but does not see the way out of the difficulty, nor does he realize the causes of the facts he relates. He suggests as a remedy, "the restoration of belief," if not too late.

It is a fact that the masses of the world are casting aside the "beliefs" which for centuries have held them. There can be no doubt that the various religious beliefs, even though very erroneous, have exercised a conservative and restraining influence upon men. These beliefs have held them under the "bondage of fear" – fear of an eternity of torment; and have kept many wicked men from many deeds of violence and shame. The growing intelligence among men is now removing this bondage, and letting them act out the depravity and selfishness which is in their hearts.

This is both a favorable and an unfavorable change. It is favorable in that it is preparing the way for the eradication of error, and the establishment of truth. It is favorable from the Scriptural standpoint as being the very means which God is permitting to eradicate error, and to overthrow present systems, and thus prepare for the reign of righteousness. It is unfavorable from the standpoint of present advantage, from the fact that man in his present depraved condition cannot use liberty in any direction without abusing it, and therefore his first experience will be disastrous, even as a child with edge tools, or as a horse released from the bridle feels that his liberty is useless unless improved in a runaway.

Self-control is a lesson which must be learned well before liberty will be a real blessing to mankind. But the lesson must come, and those alone who see the grand outcome of it from a Scriptural standpoint, see cause for rejoicing through all the distress which is drawing closer and closer upon the world. The elements composing the present social fabric are catching fire and must melt and disintegrate with the fervent heat of this day of the Lord, ere their reconstruction can be effected – the "new earth."

