

THE
HOME MISSIONARY;

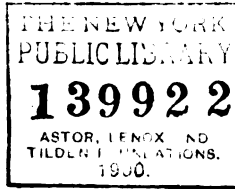
FOR THE YEAR ENDING

APRIL, 1853.

Go, PREACH THE GOSPEL.—*Mark* xvi. 15.
How shall they PREACH, except they be sent!—*Rom.* x. 15.

VOL. XXV.

PUBLISHED BY
THE AMERICAN HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY,
100 NASSAU STREET, NEW YORK.
1853.



**BAKER, GODWIN & CO., PRINTERS,
1 BRAVO STREET, New York.**

MICHIGAN.

German Mission at Detroit.

In many parts of the Middle, Western and Northwestern States, the Germans constitute, if not the largest, yet, in some respects the most important portion of our foreign population. As they incline, to a great extent, to retain their own language and literature, especially in the cities and large towns where their numbers are sufficient for the purposes of intercourse and business among themselves, they are not easily accessible to evangelical influences, even the Protestant portion of them, from the institutions of the Gospel by which they may be surrounded. So far as they are in the enjoyment of any religious privileges in this country, they are, for the most part, gathered into churches of their own. But the great body of those composed of the immigrants more recently arriving in America, are, like those in the father land, rationalistic in their views and formal in their worship, scarcely recognizing in practice the necessity of a work of grace wrought in the soul by the power of the Holy Spirit. There are among them, however, many experimental believers; and there are some godly men in the ministry, who are doing what they are able to bring the truths of the Gospel, in their purity and power, into contact with the masses of the German mind. Great interest must be felt by all Christians among us, in every form of effort which is employed for their spiritual instruction; but especially in the labors of missionaries among them of their own nation, who are themselves converted men, and whose aim it is to gather and build up churches upon the same evangelical basis with our own, to be composed only of members giving evidence of a spiritual renovation of heart, and bringing forth fruits meet for repentance.

The American Home Missionary Society the last year aided in the support of *thirty nine* such missionaries, preaching to German congregations in their own language; all of whom are men "well known and approved for their doctrinal views and experimental piety," whose desire and purpose it is strictly to adhere to the instructions of the Committee in requiring credible "evidence of regeneration by the

Spirit of God as a qualification for church membership."

Among the missions of this class, one of the most interesting and important is that named at the head of this article. The population of Detroit is now estimated at 25,000; of which more than 6,000 are Germans. The leading instrumentality in gathering the German Reformed Church in that city, to which the aid of this Society is now granted, was exerted by Rev. ABRAHAM BERKY; whose zealous and persevering devotion to the spiritual welfare of his countrymen in America, and whose eminent qualifications to minister to their instruction, with acceptance and success, have led to his recent appointment, by the Missionary Board of the Reformed Dutch Church, to labor among the German population in a destitute part of the city of New York. His place has been supplied at Detroit by Rev. CHARLES BECKER, who is also well approved as an able and faithful minister of the "grace of God which bringeth salvation." The church now embraces over sixty members, and will probably very soon be able to sustain its own christian ordinances. "The enterprise," writes Dr. Duffield, "in which Mr. Berky has been engaged, notwithstanding many difficulties and embarrassments, and chiefly those arising from the want of a place of public worship, has thus far succeeded beyond our expectations. The condition of the German population in our city is, at present, peculiarly favorable for efforts such as the church applying for the aid of the American Home Missionary Society, is now making."

Origin and Progress of the Mission.

The following succinct account of the origin and progress of this mission, was published in the columns of the German Reformed Messenger, printed at Chambersburg, Pa., as communicated by a clergyman of that denomination who was present and took part in the very interesting services at the dedication of their house of worship, on the 23d of May last:

After Rev. A. Berky had, in the fall of 1849, made his missionary tour to Milwaukie and other portions of the State of Wisconsin, he returned as far as Detroit; and, at the instance of Rev. Dr. Duffield, he determined to commence labor-

ing as a missionary under commission from the American Home Missionary Society, in the latter place. Being a German Reformed minister, he set out with the determination of raising a German Reformed Church in full connection with Synod. To this design there was no objection; for the Society proposes to aid feeble churches that are organized on strictly evangelical principles, without particular regard to the denomination with which they may be connected. Accordingly, Rev. Mr. Berky began to preach in the City-Hall on the 2nd of December, 1849. By the 10th of February following, the way had been prepared for a more decided step, and he organized a church with *twenty one* members, adopting as the constitution of the congregation, the Form prepared and recommended by the Eastern Synod. Subsequently, May 22nd, 1850, the church was incorporated; the most important features of the constitution were also embodied in the charter. It was soon felt that the enterprise labored under serious disadvantages for want of a suitable place of worship. The regular meetings were sometimes interrupted, the Hall having been occupied for other purposes, and at other times they had to be held in private houses. This has been the case particularly during the past winter. As early, therefore, as the fall of 1850, an effort was begun to build a church. A lot was purchased in a central location, at a cost of \$500. The laborious pastor immediately went to work to gather funds to pay for the lot and put up the building, and succeeded in collecting altogether \$1,740. Of this sum about \$600 were obtained in Detroit, mainly from the First Presbyterian and Congregational churches, that have from the start manifested a deep interest in the enterprise. The balance was collected chiefly in New York and other cities and towns in the East, about \$100 having been contributed by the German Reformed Churches in Ohio. The entire cost of the edifice, as nearly as can be ascertained (not including the lot, however), was \$2,680. A debt of about \$940 still rests upon the church.

The writer proceeds to describe the building, which is of brick, 65 feet long by 42 feet wide, with sittings for about 500 persons. The interior is finished in a neat and chaste style, in which good taste and economy are combined.

Altogether, this promising missionary church is both without and within, very agreeable to the eye, and rejoices my heart.

It is a gratifying illustration of what the self-denial, diligence and perseverance of one man, with the blessing of God, can do, who has fully made up his mind to do something. The funds of the American Home Missionary Society have been wisely expended; and if God continues to bless the enterprise, it will soon become the center of a powerful evangelical influence among the foreign population of Detroit.

On the day of the dedication, a German audience of about 200 was assembled at 10 o'clock, A. M. The writer preached; the pastor conducted the liturgical service of dedication, and Rev. Mr. Bielfeld of Buffalo, N. Y., offered the dedicatory prayer. The Presbyterian and Congregational churches having omitted their afternoon public worship, a large audience assembled at 3 o'clock, P. M., when divine service was conducted in the English language, and a liberal collection taken.

This German Reformed Church at Detroit, like those at Cincinnati, Louisville, and other places, illustrates what we could accomplish for the cause of Christ in nearly all our Western cities and towns, could we but command the right men and sufficient means.

Letter from Rev. Mr. Berky.

The following is from the last report of Rev. Mr. Berky, extending to the date of the discontinuance of his labors at Detroit:

I have been enabled to pass through my labors during the past quarter with some degree of delight and encouragement. Our church is finished, and was opened for worship on the 18th day of April, and dedicated on the 23d of May. Having a convenient place of worship now, our congregation has been increasing since then, and averages about 100 hearers. We have had two communion seasons since I reported last, at which we received twenty one members, thirteen by profession, and eight by letter. Our little church now numbers sixty one members. The eight members received by letter, consist of a pious family from Holland, viz: a father with four sons and three daughters. The Lord has seen proper to visit this family with severe affliction since they have been in this country. The oldest son, who came to this country sometime before the father, buried his wife shortly after his arrival. The father buried his wife eleven days after his arrival; and on Friday last, we were called

to follow to the grave one of his daughters, who died after only about eleven hours' sickness. It was a mournful occasion, yet they mourned not as those without hope. This was also a solemn occasion to all the members of our church, for she was the first of its members who has died since our organization.

As soon as we opened our church for worship, we also commenced a Sabbath school, which averages about forty scholars. We did not remove the Union school to our church as we had intended to do, as mentioned in my last report, for as we found, from the encouragement we received, that a large school could be gathered, we thought it best to keep this school especially for the children of the emigrants. The prospects of our Mission Church are in general very encouraging.

Mr. Berky then refers to the subject of his appointment by the Missionary Board of the Dutch Reformed Church, and says:

After mature and prayerful deliberation I consented to accept said appointment, provided we could obtain a suitable man to supply my place here. We have finally found such a man, the Rev. C. Becker; who, we think, is in every respect very suitable to take charge of this mission. I discontinued my labors here on the 26th of June, and my successor entered upon his labors on the 27th. I would recommend Mr. Becker to your favor as a good and pious man, and well calculated to labor in this field; and I hope the Society will grant him the necessary aid.

OHIO.

From Rev. N. T. Fay, Prairie Depot, Wood Co.

Conflicts with Error and Fanaticism.

Through multiplicity of cares my quarterly report has been somewhat delayed. During this time there has been a deeper and more general interest on the subject of religion. Such a season is full of anxiety and more abundant labors to the missionary. In the regions of darkness, where various forms of religious error prevail, what is termed a revival of religion is often but the hot-bed of serious and fatal delusion. On this account we dread such false excitements, as the approach of a moral mania or destroying

pestilence. Having no direct control of these elements which destroy men's souls, we attempt to disseminate the truths of God's word with greater earnestness.

Western Characteristics.

The western mind under excitement moves along impetuously, breaking away from all restraint. It seems to imbibe something of the wildness and roughness of the country. The sober old doctrines of the Bible are too stale and common place. A preacher, to "get up an excitement," must be a stranger; his peculiarities must be odd and strange, his interpretations of Scripture must be huge and distorted. The latest type of error, succeeding Mormonism and producing the greatest excitement, is the "Spirit Rappings." One family altar has been erected as the professed result of these communications from the spirit land. Connected with this we are experiencing some of the bitter fruits of Arminianism.

The Bible the Preacher's Weapon.

Feeling that the Bible was a neglected book, I gave a course of lectures in which the Bible itself was most conspicuous, speaking by quotation after quotation designed to teach some vital truth, so that for each doctrine advanced, the Bible appeared as the foremost and only advocate. The result seemed to be somewhat analogous to the "back fires" which the inhabitants of the wide prairies often set to stay the progress of the devouring flames, borne on by the tempest till they outstrip in speed the fleetest horse. When divine truth itself consumes the rank weeds and stubble of error, these "strange fires" go out. I have a growing confidence in the Bible. As a missionary, to do the work of the Society here, I want the Bible—the Bible spirit—the Bible doctrine—the Bible language. While in New England, under Bible instruction at home, at the Sabbath school, at the sanctuary, I did not realize its worth. Neither was I fully aware of its precious value as I looked out from the walls of the College and Theological Seminary, upon a community molded by its power. But since my residence here, I have been led to bow most reverently before its great and glorious author, and to praise and adore him for these revelations of himself, made through his dear Son, and the inspired Apostles and Prophets. It is my prayer that he will be pleased to afford me large measures of his grace, while I endeavor to bathe my spirit in this living fount, as in the healing pool of Bethesda; that he will open my eyes to