

REVIEW OF THE YEAR.

OUR OWN COUNTRY.

"Watchman, what of the night?" God has sent waymarks along the highway of time, which only the thoughtless pass with-out pausing for a careful review of the past, and some anxious thought for the future.

REVIVALS.

The year opened with the fifth annual observance of that grand conception of modern Christianity, the week of prayer. From year to year this solemn season has risen in interest, has been more extensively observed, and followed with more striking effects.

Still it cannot be said that, either in our own churches, or on the Christian field at large, the refreshings of the last winter and spring amounted to a general revival.

GENERAL PROSPERITY.

But, even with this abatement of the animating aspect of the season under review, it was pleasant to hear from the churches generally the account of more than usual prosperity, both in things spiritual and temporal.

We are sure that such has been the case in our own Church. The statistical tables in the Minutes of our General Assembly, as compared with those of the preceding year, will show advance in a large majority of the churches—small in many cases, but still an advance.

RETURN OF PEACE.

April brought with it the suppression of the great and wicked pro-slavery rebellion, the return of peace, and the conviction, on all hands, that the fiat against slavery, which had previously gone forth, had thereby received its fulfillment.

This event instantly became a conspicuous one in the year's history of church enterprise. One of the worst features of the coming of the rebellion, had consisted in the cultivation of a Southern Church sentiment of inveterate hostility to Northern Christianity, chiefly because of the aggressiveness of the latter upon the slave system; and, in the New School Presbyterian and Methodist bodies, a secession from the national church organizations with which they had been connected.

SOUTHERN EVANGELIZATION.

But for some time previous to the final triumph of the Government, the enterprise of the Northern Churches had been making itself felt in gradual encroachments upon that dark spiritual iniquity, as the reconquest of territory opened the way. Missions for Freedmen had been pretty extensively instituted, and in some localities churches composed of citizens, some of whom had kept pure their fidelity to the Union, and others of whom were more than satisfied to return to it, broke off their Southern ecclesiastical connections, and sought readmission to their former relations.

DEMOMINATIONAL WORK SOUTH.

This new phase of our Christian duty toward the South received the earnest attention of the great ecclesiastical meetings of the last spring. Our own Assembly, regarding compactness of machinery as an element of efficiency in all its church extension work, charged its existing Home Missionary agency with the execution of our church work in that direction.

Southern slave-holders, including, we are ashamed to say, the great bulk of Southern professing Christians outside of the colored churches. From the hour when, thirteen years ago, Dr. Ross horrified the Assembly by an unqualified declaration that the Divine right of slavery had become, and would henceforward remain, the doctrine of Southern Christians, and that they were resolved upon its perpetuation as a Christian duty.

GENERAL CHURCH EXTENSION.

In the mean time, neither our own denomination in particular, nor the Church as a whole, has been idle in the work of Church Extension in other parts of our country, particularly those remote regions which are now the goal for a rushing emigration.

In this connection it is proper to notice the very thorough mountain and coast exploration performed last summer by the judicious and efficient Secretary of our Home Missionary Committee, Rev. Dr. Kendall.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL.

The more general view of the Christian work of the year, in our country, would be incomplete, without a special notice of the notable era in American Congregationalism. We have before alluded to the fact that the Congregationalists have no national ecclesiastical organization.

The Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in default of the occurrence of any General Convention the present year, took official order for the recovery of Southern ground, differing only in form from that of the Presbyterian churches. Some progress has been made, but not extensive as yet.

The Baptist churches have no national church organization, but use, as a bond of union, such national denominational societies as the Missionary, Publication, &c. The anniversaries of these societies took place last spring, in the city of St. Louis. They settled, within their respective spheres, their denominational policy toward the South. It was one of extension, but avoidance of all complicity with the rebellions or slaveholding spirit. They too are working, not without fruit, but in patient waiting for the full sheaves.

To the Congregationalists, in the absence of any national organization, and with almost no preceptory hold upon Southern territory, the South is a purely missionary field, to enter and build up de novo. They are at work with their characteristic energy, but as yet with only moderate success. The Reformed Dutch, United and Reformed Presbyterians, and Lutherans, have established righteous testimony on the subject of religion for the South, and whatever any of them have done, has been in accordance with it.

THE FREEDMEN.

In the mean time, every leading denomination has laid itself out for work among the Freedmen—some through Church bureaus of their own, specially erected for the purpose, and others through their permanent departments of evangelistic effort, or through outside associations. This work has been extensive and rich in fruits.

THE CHURCH SUPPORTING THE COUNTRY.

With the remarkable exception above named, the religious bodies of the loyal States responded to the great goodness of God in the conquest of rebellion, the return of peace, and the bringing upon slavery its doom, in sentiments of high-toned patriotism and fervent gratitude. Scarcely an ecclesiastical meeting, large or small, has been held since April, which failed to give unambiguous and outspoken utterance to this feeling. The same thing is true of other religious associations, such as the Bible, Tract, and Foreign Missionary societies.

times, there has been within our remembrance, no period when so much of public respect and influence was accorded to religion and its ministers and churches as now. The religion of the loyal States has well earned this meed from the public.

joice in the guiding of the Holy Spirit, which brought it into existence. This will be especially true, if it shall be clothed with an influence which will draw out the personal activity of Christians in the work of God. The noblest record of any year in the modern history of the church, awaits that of the one which opens a new era of general, self-sacrificing and well-applied lay effort for the salvation of men.

MINISTERIAL RECORD.

- Ballantine, Henry, Pres. O. S.—Died at sea, Nov. 9, while returning from 30 years' service as missionary of the Am. Board in India.
Beatty, G. H., Luth.—Transferred from Woodbury, Md., to Shippensburg, Pa.
Boag, W. K., Pres. N. S.—Resigned charge of church in Marengo, Iowa, and became teacher in Ottumwa, same State.

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