

ENGLAND.

The year has been an eventful one in more respects than one. The administration of political power has changed hands, and a great political agitation threatens a new transfer, with the possibility of a revolution, unless the claims of the working classes are conceded to. The Rinderpest, at the beginning of the year, threatened the destruction of John Bull's well-fed cattle; toward its close, the cholera spread its ravages among his ill-fed workmen. Though a wide-spread and hostile conspiracy threatens to wrest away one of the "United Kingdoms," and has assailed one of her most cherished dependencies, yet peace has been England's portion; and while all Central Europe was convulsed with war, she was engaged in laying that great Atlantic Telegraph, which will do much to bind the nations in Christian unity.

In the Church, on the other hand, the year has not been a quiet one. The Anglo-Catholic party have pushed their practices and pretensions to such a pitch, that many otherwise most indifferent persons have been aroused to resistance. Englishmen may well fear when the Church of their fathers claims to rest on some quasi-miraculous tradition, rather than on the collective life of Christian homes joined in one household of faith, and on the sure word of God.

On the other hand, the growing rationalist party are, if possible, still more dangerous to her peace. They are growing by reaction against the narrow oneness of ritualism, which, in turn, reacts against their unbelief. The danger that lies before England is, that she may yet run the fate of the unreformed Latin nations, in unceasing alternation between the extremes of unbelief and the extremes of superstition.

But the picture has its bright side—a very bright side. Never were so many earnest and devoted men working so hard to supplement the deficiencies of the Church organization; never was "the condition of England" discussed and met in a more Christian spirit. Never was the public conscience more active against public wrong-doing. The indignation against Governor Eyre forced a covert regret for Parliament.

Evangelistic and revival work is wide-spread and systematic. Lay and clerical preachers, under the direction of London societies, have gone into every district. Ready workers have "watched for souls," and in the words of the *Kephal*, "the Lord's hunters are upon every hill." Efforts for social and political regeneration were never more active, though often misdirected. There seems to be a growing conviction that any permanent reformation in Church and State must begin in the homes of the people, and that—so long as their squalid condition drives the workmen to the gin palace, and the pressure of poverty separates mother and children—only the branches of social evil are attacked. In behalf of the homeless classes, a wide-spread interest has been excited, and "unfortunates," "casuals," mendicants and paupers have all in turn had the public ear.

The necessity for political reform is amply evident from the scandalous facts elicited in regard to electoral corruption—tyranny, clergyman and professional men of high standing; and in the fact that class legislation is still the rule; measures "to stamp out the Rinderpest" were passed a few days after Parliament met, but a bill to provide homes for thousands of families left homeless by the creation of public works, was hustled to the end of the session and then shelved. On the other hand, the workmen have shown, by a general orderliness, and by firm resistance to the Sabbath-breakers' "league," how largely their moral sense and self-control can be relied upon.

In Church matters, the main points of interest beyond those already noticed, are the advance of Presbyterianism and the movement for union. The Scotch element in England—numbering hundreds of thousands—has hitherto been absorbed by the dissenting sects or lost to the Church. An effort to establish their national church life in England has been largely successful, and the union of the principal branches, if successful, will remove much existing friction in the work.

A movement for union between Baptists and Independents, and between the various Methodist bodies, has not yet led to any fruit. Some of these sects are showing tendencies to a more liturgical form of worship.

The cause of national education has greatly advanced in England during the past ten years, and the national schools have been attended by a very large proportion of the "children of the nation." Much excitement was caused by a recent law allowing dissenters to withdraw their children from national schools during the hour for religious instruction, where the school is under Church patronage. A movement, begun in 1850, to educate workingmen and women, and to substitute "national education" for the mere juvenile instruction, which goes by that name, meets with favor, and has enlisted the services of men in the highest ranks of the literary world.

It would be unfair to omit mention of the efforts made by English philanthropists, especially in Bradford and Birmingham, and among the Society of Friends, in behalf of the Freedmen of America.

The new year of 1886 is not important. Dr. Whewell and the High Church poets, Keble and Neale, are the most prominent individuals removed by death.

SCOTLAND.

The staid kirk of this Presbyterian country have not been uninfluenced by the tendencies at work in England. Ritualistic and "free thought" parties (on a very small scale) have raised their heads, and the long tabernacle organ and hymns are coming into favor in some quarters, though the highland psalmists still stand on the defensive. But the great feature of the year and country has been the movement to "unite" the churches which sprang from the established Church in 1638, 1743 and 1843. In the early part of the year, public sentiment was aroused to this by monster meetings and sermons, and when the supreme courts of judicature met in May, the reports of the joint committee were very favorably received and transmitted to the Presbyteries. Although the two main parties have failed to agree on some abstract questions, and although two Free Church doctors have deserted the committee, there is still a fair prospect of success.

The revivals on the north-east coast and in the mining-districts deserve grateful mention.

IRELAND.

The monster flock known as the Fenian movement has agitated Ireland during the most of the year. In spite of the opposition of the hierarchy and the jealous watchfulness of the government, it seems to have prevailed the bulk of the Catholic population, while the authorities fear to provoke hostilities by arming the Orange party.

The most prominent Church questions of the year have been, the abolition of the Establishment and the control of education. The Irish Church has no moral right to retain its present endowments. But to touch them is to destroy the prestige of all the land tenure in the three kingdoms, in a way that would open the road for a sweeping agrarianism, as the Church's right to glebes and tithes antedates almost every other title in the kingdom. Hence the hesitancy of statesmen and the partitionship of landholders.

The efforts of the Roman Catholic hierarchy to do away with mixed education have not been entirely successful. The measures of the government to place Mayo north on a footing of equality with the Queen's colleges have been declared illegal.

The Irish Church (Episcopal) is in a large degree a working Church now, but largely, too, as men that beat the air. Her prestige is so bad with the masses of the people, that she is rather a hindrance than a help to Home Missionary work.

The Presbyterian Church, purged of heresy and united for the most part, under one assembly, is rapidly advancing to fill up the field opened up in the south and west by the famine of 1848. It is hoped that her members may be aroused to support the ministry in a way that will obviate the necessity for the *Regium Donum*, and so allow of an entire union of all branches of the Church.

The death of Dr. Edgar was an event of marked importance.

FRANCE.

L'Empire, c'est la paix, or at least has been for some time. But peace is not prosperity. The upper classes have been ruined by the extravagance to which the example of Eugenie and the policy of Napoleon has urged them, while the mass of the people are as unstable as people must be who live in the street, dine at a *cafe* and sleep in homeless rooms. The manufacturing districts have been suffering from the "blessings" of free trade, and wide-spread inundations and bad harvests have reached their shores.

In the Romish Church the national and the papal parties have been more widely separated over the questions of the temporal power and infallibility of the Pope (rather than of the Church), and indications have not been wanting that the Mahomedan dogma of the immaculate conception is rejected by men high in rank and authority. The liberal Catholics openly avow that they regard Protestants as their allies against superstition and scepticism.

The Reformed Church has made the year an eventful one. The orthodox party, victorious at the polls, determined to purge the ranks of free-thinkers and tried to pass M. Paschoud into the retirement of private life. The minister of worship reversed their decision, and they at once deposed Paschoud from office. The national conference at the same time took measures to prescribe a religious test for all who vote in Church elections. The rationalists withdrew and organized a separate conference, and the churches have been sending in their adherence to one or the other. The orthodox party now ask the State to allow them to restore Synodical government.

The Free Church is on the increase, but is more weighty than numerous. Both Churches are active in exertions to meet the religious wants of the people, especially the young men among whom they are organizing Christian Unions.

The infidels of France are growing bolder and more active. Materialism, reimported from Germany, has many adherents, while Socialism, which in 1848 rendered the Empire a necessity, is dying out.

BELGIUM.

Romanism is again on the throne, and is rivaling Spain and the middle ages. Protestantism, nominally free, has to conceal its operations. Infidelity is growing at home, and the nation is a general resort for sceptics from abroad.

In politics, the anti-Papal party are in power, and act as a restraint upon the debasing fanaticism of the people.

HOLLAND.

This country, once the land of a dry, abstract orthodoxy, is showing a deplorable growth of infidelity. Parts of the Church are still alive, and the labors of De Liefde and Da Costa are not lost, but the general complexion of Church matters is a sad one.

GERMANY.

1866 will be a year to date from in Germany; a year that has done much to wipe out the conservative bargains (we cannot call them treaties) of 1815, and to sweeten and sober German life and thought in the future; as well as to destroy the political power that Jesuitism built up for the Romish Church on the miseries of the Thirty Years War.

At the beginning of the year, Austria and Prussia were jealous rival powers, with a hundred petty States of a hundred various complexions, around and between them. Prussia was Protestant, but bureaucratic and despotic; Austria, in the hands of a Jesuit reaction, was persecuting nationalities and breaking faith with churches. The summer's war has placed Prussia in the foremost rank of the nations, wiped out half the petty sovereignties that swell the *Alpenrind* of *Gotha*, has wrested Venetia from Austria, and forced her to concede national rights and religious liberty to her dependencies. Large concessions have been made by the Austrian Emperor to Protestants, and the membership of the empire is not occupied by one.

Croatia, Illyria, Moravia, Hungary, and Bohemia demand or have obtained national parliaments and national armies, and Bohemia seems about to number itself among the Protestant nations.

Christian work in Germany was largely interrupted by the war, but has not ceased. The Sabbath-school cause advances rapidly, and promises well for the Church, though the Germans hesitate to let women "teach religion." The great Christian reaction, which began with Schleiermacher and Harms, (who died this year), still continues, and shows itself even in such men, as Schenkel, whose book, (recently translated by Dr. Furness,) bad as it is, is a decided improvement upon Strauss and Bruno Bauer.

ITALY.

The year has seen Italian unity almost consummated; foreign forces withdrawn from Rome, and the temporal power an almost defenceless anomaly. The war conferred less glory on Italian arms than on Italian honor, by the refusal to abandon Prussia even when all that Italy asked was offered in return. The defeats of Custoza and Lissa were somewhat compensated for by Garibaldi's successes in the Tyrol, and if peace had been postponed for a month, Prussians and Italians would have met at the gates, if not in the streets, of Vienna.

In church matters, the Italian government have been sitting on "abuses" and "pulling down roof-tiles." A Commission to inquire into the state of ecclesiastical education,

showed that the old Jesuit system was in full force, and led to a transfer of two-thirds of these revenues to secular education. Since the present monastic orders have been suppressed and their revenues set apart for educational and religious purposes.

Protestant mission-work in Italy has made slow but steady advances. Preachers, evangelists, colporteurs, and deaconesses have labored unceasingly; "but what are they among so many?" If the Protestant Churches of other lands had heartily and fully sustained the true national Waldensian Church in its labors, instead of trying to spread extra-national systems and ideas, or to whitewash Romanism or "liberalism" into Christianity, larger results might have been expected.

Evangelistic work has been opposed by both the levity and indifference of half-educated infidels, and the intolerance of the priests and the bigoted followers. The massacre at Barletta and the disturbances at Palermo showed how far this latter party are ready to go. They doubtless are trying to organize, but have failed for want of life to cement their puny societies.

OTHER COUNTRIES.

Spain.—The atmosphere of Spain grows more unhealthy as bigots succeed statesmen at the helm of affairs, and insurrections and executions grow too numerous for specification. Infidelity still evades the Church's igouistical grasp, and work for Christ and His word is done in a corner. A revolution is anticipated.

Russia.—Rumors of union between the Mary-worshipping Church of Rome and the Czar-worshipping Church of Russia were current for a while, but the plan came to nothing. Perfect religious liberty has been secured during the year, partly through the efforts of the Evangelical Alliance; which, we trust, will put an end to the troubles of the Polish Roman Catholics, the Livonian Lutherans, and the independent Greek Churchmen.

The best side of the Greek Church is being made use of for the good of the people, in the circulation of the vernacular Scriptures among the common people.

Turkey.—Mahomedan intolerance has been so far abated, through the good offices of the new British minister—Lord Lyons—as to allow of perfect liberty to abandon the Mahomedan faith.

Local officials, under French and Egyptian influence, have goaded the Christians of Crete into insurrection, of which the end is not yet. The design seems to be to secure its annexation to Egypt. The war has been carried on with more than Oriental cruelty, and a Constantinopolitan has been advanced and "decorated" for recommending the extinction of the Christians.

There is a general rise of national feelings throughout the Turkish empire, which bodes no good for its stability. Arabs, Armenians, Syrians, Greeks, and Bulgarians alike look forward to independence, and to a settlement of the Eastern question from within.

The proposal to establish a Bible House at Constantinople, and a Protestant College in Syria, with the settlement of the American colony at Jaffa, are among the signs of the times.

British America.—The Fenian invasion of Canada and the burning of Quebec are the main events of importance. The first did not succeed in gratifying Irish longings for national independence, by destroying the independence of an unoffending free people. The second called out in large measure the Christian sympathies and benefactions of the people, and gave Romanism another chance to show its exclusiveness and bigotry.

The plan of confederation among the British Colonies is still pendant, and the Colonial delegates are in England to urge it upon the Home government. It is hoped that it will largely develop their strength and resources, and that it will take the control of public education in Lower Canada out of the hands of the priests.

One Presbyterianian union has been effected in the "Lower" or sea-board provinces, and others are in contemplation. Hymns and organs are under general discussion.

Latin America.—The failure of Napoleon to establish a rival influence in Mexico, to counterbalance Anglo-Saxon influence on this continent; the defeat of Spain's attempt to restore her South American dominions; and the humiliation of the great "Slave Empire" of Brazil, are the most important events of the year.

Protestant work in these countries advances slowly. The other branch has established a Presbytery in Brazil.

Missionary.—The Foreign Mission fields, some of which we have already noticed, report, in general, satisfactory progress. In China, the Peking rebellion has been finally crushed out, and a Mahomedan insurrection has met the same fate. The missions have been making progress, and Halleck's "International Law" and the "Westminster Standards" are among the latest announcements in Chinese literature. In *Thibet*, the Moravians are at length reaping the fruits of ten years' labor. In *India*, Christianity appears to be "taking out its naturalization papers," in spite of the scandals of British rule and the despotic tendency of British education. A great Indian organization—the Brahmo Samaj—has been formed for the suppression of idolatry, but some of its adherents go on to eulogize Christ as "an Astarte," and one who died for the good of the world; and they will probably not stop there. The American M. E. Mission, for instance, has twenty-one workers in a population as great as our Eastern and Middle States. In *Persia*, political oppression has been the means of driving many Nestorians to declare themselves Protestants, in order to escape the rule of their Melek or chief. The cholera, which has devastated this country, with Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Turkey, has impeded missionary work. In *Madagascar*, the advance has been unprecedented, and as Queen Victoria has personally and successfully interposed to secure religious liberty for the Christians, the result is secure. In a few years this "island of martyrs" will be a Christian country. In *South Africa*, the wars between Dutch Boers and natives has interrupted the French missionary work. In *Australia*, the many scattered fields (with the exception of Tahiti) reported blessed results, in spite of Roman Catholic interference and persecutions. In the *Sandwich Islands*, Bishop Staley's historic mission has not met with the success anticipated, and both the English and the American Episcopal Churches refuse to sustain him.

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