

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

JANUARY, 1875.

THOSE who are in the habit of reading this little monthly record of ecclesiastical events will remember the appeal made by the Indian Bishops to the Church at home for men and money to re-invigorate the feeble Indian offshoot. The document was one of the most curious confessions of failure which could well have been made, and we ventured to suggest at the time that its publication was the result of some careless oversight. The S.P.G. is, however, circulating an appeal among the clergy, in which these "dear Brethren in Christ" are reminded of this "loud call," and are asked to "read again the stirring and pressing appeal of India's chief Pastors," and to make it "a special subject of intercession and exhortation on the appointed Day of Prayer." Great results, it appears, followed on last year's "day of intercession;" some soldiers turned missionaries, and some home clergymen also took up the foreign work; this is, really, a very likely and legitimate result of a day of intercession, and very well exemplifies the reflex action of prayer. A man, or a number of men, pray earnestly for a given object; their hearts are set on it, their minds dwell on it, and, as a natural consequence, they devote their energies to furthering the cause for which they have been praying. When the object prayed for is one which is attainable through human effort, prayer, for those who believe in it, may seriously influence

the result, by turning the energies of the mind in the direction of the wished-for prize; what a man prays for earnestly, he wishes for earnestly, and his faculties will be on the stretch to seize every opportunity of furthering the object in view. Hence we have no doubt that the "Day of Intercession" brought both men and money into the Mission field, although we do not ascribe the result to supernatural means. It reads oddly nowadays to see a Christian Society asking for missionaries in order that help may be given to "the Lord against the mighty." One wonders somewhat confusedly who these "mighty" may be, who are sufficiently strong to be too much for the Omnipotent single-handed, but apparently only just overweight him, as a few Englishmen on his side will, it is hoped, be sufficient to turn the balance in his favour. However, as "India has yet to be converted" it is very evident that "the Lord" alone has not been equal to the task, and it is therefore quite reasonable that the "cry has gone forth to the Church for men who will come to 'his' help." When wicked rationalists hint doubts about Almightyness, they are promptly rebuked and are accused of blasphemy; it is, we suppose, all right and proper when the "blasphemy" comes from the S.P.G. The vigorous ritualistic party are having a little mission of their own to India, which shows far more appreciation of the character of the people with whom they have to deal than is common among English missionaries. In fact, they follow the wise Roman Catholic plan of making the new religion resemble the old one as much as possible. The Ritualists have noticed that the Hindoo reverences a priesthood, and admires asceticism, and that he despises a "religious organism which does not profess to have a priesthood;" hence it comes to pass that "our conversions are confined to the very lowest class." They argue, therefore, that to do battle with the "false religions" on equal terms, they must recognise

the "two great principles which are rooted in the Asiatic mind," and they accordingly send out from S. John's, Cowley, some "Evangelist Fathers"—celibate priests who lead ascetic lives. This move really shows some acuteness, but it must be rather distressing to read in a Calcutta native paper that the arrival of these Fathers causes a hope in native circles that the English mind is at last moving up to the higher mysticism of the Asiatic faith! This amiable approval does not sound very encouraging. We would suggest to the Evangelist Fathers that if they really wish to impress the Hindoo mind with their asceticism, they should try and rival some of the well-known austerities practised by Indian devotees. A Father swinging calmly from a hook would surely be a proof of the English progress in asceticism, and would, perhaps, enable them to meet on an equal footing the priests of the rival faith.

The excitement caused by Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet on the "Vatican Decrees" has naturally spread far and wide, and the glove he threw down at the feet of the English Catholics has been caught up by a score of eager combatants. Archbishop Manning was the first to accept the challenge, and talked in his subtle and evasive way about "conscience" and "duty to God," trying to make it appear that the limitations of civil obedience which were acknowledged by the Roman Catholic were also binding on all those who had a conscience at all. The plea was ingenious, but transparently sophistical. Bishop Ullathorne had his say, and Monsignor Capel had his. The latter boldly owned that the "ecclesiastical power was superior to the civil," and his honest, but over-zealous, avowal has been met, by members of his own Church, with considerable disapproval. A leading Roman Catholic newspaper, however, lays down that, "the Pope, in virtue of his ecclesiastical office, has the power of deposing any Sovereign whose government he may consider injurious to the spiritual welfare of that

country." This, at least, is fairly plain speaking, though we acknowledge that we cannot help remembering a boast once made—"I can call spirits from the vasty deep," and the common sense reply:—

"Well, so can I, and so can any man ;

But will they come when you do call for them ?"

We fancy that Pius IX., deposing a king, would find that, however well his thunder-bolt was launched, it would fall short of its mark, and it would be well for him if it did not recoil on his own throne. The poor successor of Peter is, however, comforted and sustained by the offerings of the faithful, and the 2,600*l.*, lately forwarded to him from Ireland as "Peter's pence," must go far to console him for the attack on S. Peter by the viperish ex-Prime Minister, which so deeply vexed the Apostolic heart, although, while denouncing it, the critic mildly remarked that he had not read it. To us, in England, the main practical interest of this pamphlet is, that it seems to show a final break between the Liberal leader and the Roman Catholic Church, and we cannot but watch with interest for the next step forward on Mr. Gladstone's part. Is his quarrel with Rome a sign that he is shaking off some of his ecclesiastical fetters? If it is, it would indeed be a notable "sign of the times."

Archbishop Manning, it seems, has no intention of tolerating any rebellion within the Church, and he has caused a letter to be read publicly in the London Churches to the effect that any so-called Catholic who denies Papal Infallibility is, *ipso facto*, excommunicate ; and that if such persons continue to go to confession and to communion they are only committing an act of sacrilege, and are increasing thereby their final condemnation. An ex-Roman Catholic priest, the Rev. R. R. Suffield, now a Unitarian minister at Croydon, has contributed to this controversy an able letter, pointing out how Old and Neo-Catholicism are, practically, two different religions, and laying stress

on the degrading effects of the subservience now necessarily paid to an Italian Bishop. Mr. Suffield takes up the true position that orthodox Romanists are now really in the position of foreigners, as owning allegiance primarily to a foreign potentate. He suggests that the Church of England should "perform the happy dispatch," as the Japanese say, by setting an example of self-sacrifice, and declining, from henceforth, all State favours. But surely Mr. Suffield does not expect the Church to do this voluntarily? Poverty has long since ceased to be reckoned among the Beatitudes.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has discovered a new science. When we heard that the ecclesiastical head of the English Church had publicly stated that we were offered "scientific proof of the truth of the Christian religion," all free thinkers naturally pricked up their ears, and "doubted whereunto this would grow." But disappointment awaited the enemies of the Church. An archbishop does not use language, like common people, in the vulgar sense of the words: he speaks an archiepiscopal tongue, which is, however unintentionally on his part, very misleading to the public. The archiepiscopal science is not what lay-people call science at all; all that we know as "science" is contemptuously set aside, as "science that deals with matter;" and it is some mysterious entity which deals with man,—but is not anthropology; which speaks of his life here,—but is not physiology; of his hopes hereafter, of God who made him, and his relation to his maker, but appears not to be theology, which is *the science par excellence* of Archbishop Tait. "The name of science belongs as truly, or more truly, to this subject than to the subjects to which the word is now so commonly applied." Unluckily, we are not told the name of this new science; it ought to be theology, but the Archbishop can scarcely have announced with all this flourish of trumpets, that he was going to give a "*theological* proof of the truth of

the Christian religion;" besides, theology does not include man and his life here. So we are quite in the dark as to this newly-discovered queen of sciences, to whom alone apparently the name of science ought to belong. This queer thing, however, is what affords scientific proof to Christianity. So, after all, the scientific proof is only archiepiscopal proof, with a new name. The reverend champion of the faith did, however, try to borrow a few scientific fig-leaves wherewith to make aprons for the shivering creation of his brain, but he failed in utilising them as sorrily as did poor Adam and Eve. He dressed up Butler's argument about the living powers being independent of the bodily faculties, in nineteenth century garb, and suggested that as atoms were indestructible perhaps the immortal soul resided in the atoms. So we have "every reason to believe, as a matter of science, that death is not the end." Bishop Fraser lately discovered in the theory of evolution a proof of the hereafter of the individual man, and now Archbishop Tait proves the immortality of the soul from the indestructibility of atoms. Truly, drowning men catch at straws. Nevertheless, it is a cheering "sign" to see the dignitaries of the Church clutching at the robe of Science to avoid being swept away. "Man has a free will," says his Grace, deciding off-hand a serious controversy, and, therefore, "he must have a connection with a will something like his own above and beyond him." Why? Supposing that man is free—a very large supposition, but which this is not the place to contest—why does that fact imply a "higher" will? Also we "must" come to the conclusion that our abstract notions of beauty and right are embodied in a being who is the "concrete of all" these. Again why? Are all abstractions to be found in a concrete form somewhere? Cruelty, wickedness, ugliness, for instance? These unsupported "musts" of the Archbishop, these unproved assumptions which beg the whole question, are the "scientific proofs"

which we were promised. "Put not your trust in archbishops, for there is no help in them." By twisting Professor Tyndall's words in a way which—in a layman—would be a dishonourable perversion, the Archbishop makes him say, that in his best hours he had "forced on his mind the distinct belief that there was some mind greater than any human mind." If the Professor said this, it must have been in some private conversation with His Grace, or else the reporters entered into a conspiracy to misrepresent Dr. Tyndall in the papers. His remark that "atheism does not offer a satisfactory solution to the problems of the universe," is scarcely an assertion that theism does; and it is well known that the Professor regards the "unknown mystery" as at present unsolved, if not for ever insoluble, and that he therefore refuses either to assert or to deny the existence of God. The final insinuation, that Professor Tyndall rather envies Christians their "faith," can only be met with a smile of derision. We are cheered by being told, in conclusion, that Christians must write in order to oppose the spread of scepticism, and we note with satisfaction that the trumpet-call is ringing through the Christian camp, to sound the alarm, and warn the soldiers of the powerful foe in their front.

The Dean of Westminster has written a remarkable preface to a volume of letters and discourses by Father Hyacinthe (M. Loyson), which have been translated into English by Mme. Loyson, and are now offered to the public by Messrs. Macmillan and Co., under the title of "Catholic Reform." In this preface, which is, practically, rather an independent essay, Dean Stanley defends the position of Liberals within the various Christian Churches; he maintains that men who disagree with the dominant party in any Church are morally entitled to remain within it, and "to strive, openly and honourably, to realise within it their own ideal of Christianity." He points out how every Church has had its Nonconformists, and he

considers that those act wisely who do not form a new sect, but endeavour rather to widen the limits of the Church within which they find themselves. The "English Latitudinarians," he says, proudly adopting as an honourable title a term of popular reproach, have not thought it worth while to become a sect, but have preferred to remain within the Church. However much many of us may disagree with the views, on this head, of such men as Dean Stanley or as Dr. Colenso, Bishop of Natal, the position they take up is a very comprehensible one, and no one has a right to accuse them of bad faith because they elect to abide in the Church. Besides, such men as these do free thought a service, which no one outside the Church could render "the cause;" they reach men and women whom more advanced teachers could not touch, and although they do not fight in the vanguard, they yet are brave soldiers against illiberalism and superstition, and they take their share of vituperation and persecution. Many a one of our leading thinkers owes his first awakening to the teaching of these Broad Church Christians. On the Day of Intercession, November 30th, Dr. Caird, the great Scotch Presbyterian, preached in Westminster Abbey, at Dean Stanley's invitation, taking the place occupied last year by Professor Max Müller. Some day, we may hope, Church pulpits will be readily opened to all great teachers, and the way to that desirable consummation will be greatly smoothed if the Church dignitaries, so far as they can do so without incurring legal penalties, will, as opportunity occurs, invite worthy laymen and ministers of other denominations to speak to their people. The intercommunication will be a mutual benefit.

Bishop Colenso's visit to England has been the signal for an exhibition of petty religious bigotry. The Bishop was visiting at Oxford, and had arranged to preach in one of the local churches; the sermon was duly advertised, but when the report of the intended

profanation reached the ears of his lordship of Oxford, that prelate donned war harness, rushed forward against his brother Bishop, and forbade the clergyman of the church in question to open his pulpit to the dreaded heretic. Of course the clergyman has no option but to comply, and notice of the inhibition was consequently given: the ingenious parson, however, evaded the episcopal injunction, by quietly delivering, himself, the sermon which was to have been preached by the Bishop. Meanwhile, Bishop Colenso preached in the chapel of Balliol College, while his deputy represented him at Carfax, and thus delivered two sermons instead of one. We feel grateful to the Bishop of Oxford for thus drawing public opinion to Dr. Colenso's heresy: partly because it is encouraging to see that a bishop heretical enough to be considered dangerous, yet remains legally a bishop, and so helps to encourage other free-thinking ministers in their heresy in the Church of England, and partly because sensible people will feel themselves alienated from a church, whose dignitaries show so much narrow-mindedness, and so much fear of the very moderate heresy of the Bishop of Natal.

The Bishop of Lincoln makes himself prominent in inhibiting the Bishop of Natal from preaching in any of the churches in his diocese, in consequence of the sentence of deposition pronounced against him by Bishop Gray, of Cape Town. As counsel for the Bishop of Natal, Mr. J. Westlake thus warns the Bishop of Lincoln in his letter to the Editor of the *Times*, dated December 6th:—"Upon this, let me suggest to the Bishop of Lincoln a view which I am willing to believe has not occurred to him. It is for the purpose of legal order that he holds his power of inhibition, and when he uses that power in support of a condemnation pronounced in flagrant and avowed defiance of law, he commits a breach of trust, and his conduct is not morally distinguishable from that of a magistrate who should abuse his powers for the pur-

poses of political faction. A magistrate against whom such an offence was proved would be removed from the Commission of the Peace, and when the Establishment is defended on the ground of the liberty secured to the Church by law, those who care to maintain it should inquire whether there is not some public mark of censure with which the Queen might be advised to visit open disobedience, in the exercise of legal powers, to Her Majesty's order in Council, by which the pretended Cape Town sentence was set aside, and all authorities were required to govern themselves accordingly."

A controversy has arisen in the *Western Morning News* in consequence of the London correspondent of that paper having expressed a guarded approval of Euthanasia. One of those clear-sighted folk who spy heresy in everything, hotly demanded an apology to the readers of the paper, for laying before them such wicked "atheism"! The correspondent makes a most clever and spirited reply to his assailant, and has, so far, all the laurels of the contest. We shall probably soon have the Bishop of Lincoln declaring that as Cremation destroys the resurrection of the body, so does Euthanasia imply the non-immortality of the soul.

The Bishop of Peterborough has given us a new rule for the selection of our creed—a new criterion by which to test the value of various and conflicting opinions as they are urged upon our acceptance.

This fresh light on a difficult subject may well arrest the attention alike of orthodox and unorthodox, simplifying as it does, to one narrow point, considerations which have hitherto presented an aspect of bewildering complexity; although whether the results when reached will be precisely those to which the worthy Bishop was endeavouring to lead his hearers is a matter, to say the least, of considerable doubt.

Contrasting the Gospel of Christianity with what he designates "the Gospel of Science," he earnestly recommends his listeners to reject the latter, not on

the grounds of its weakness or falsity, but because he affirms it not to be a Gospel of good news.

Here is a change of position—a shifting of ground with a vengeance!

We have been hitherto instructed to look at the truth or probability of all statements presenting themselves for our acceptance, and with the more care when weighty consequences hang on the issue; but, according to the Bishop, we may be spared this elaborate sifting of questions, and ask ourselves, not what is proved or provable, but what is most pleasant and agreeable to our feelings—most propitious to our wishes.

Tried impartially on this ground which of these two Gospels will gain the greatest number of adherents; in other words, which can be truly held to be “good tidings of great joy” for the large majority of mankind?

Not, surely, that of Christianity, which consigns to eternal punishment ninety-nine out of a hundred of the whole human race, leaving a doubtful salvation to be wrought out in fear and trembling for the remaining few; not, surely, that religion which says of the way to life “few there be that find it,” while, for the many, it points out the broad and well-trodden road to destruction.

Is it not rather the Gospel of Science, which, if it speaks of no paradise of bliss for the elect, has no hell of eternal torment even for the weakest and lowest of mankind, and which, if it cannot lift the veil from the unknown future, at least lends to it no ghastly terrors engendered by folly and superstition.

Dr. Magee appears to be the victim of as great a delusion about Tyndall and Science, as the member for Peterborough entertains with respect to “Tichborne” and the Jesuits.

Italy has no enthusiast to circulate free thought publications among her people, and the cradle of liberty is very behind-hand in theological reform.

As no native-born innovator appeared, an English gentleman has been bold enough to try the experiment of importing heresy. Some of Mr. Thomas Scott's most effective publications have been selected by him, and translated into Italian; he has also translated two of Mr. Voysey's sermons, which read very effectively in their new tongue. These tracts are published in Milan, and are widely circulated there and at Florence, the people buying them readily. We can scarcely imagine that the priests look favourably upon this new heresy, and the vigorous attack made on sacerdotalism in an original essay of Captain Dyas—the publication in question—entitled 'Lettere di un Libero Pensatore Inglese' will not make that gentlemen a very welcome guest in priestly circles. It is more than pleasant to hear that so noble-spirited a work is being crowned with the success that it deserves.

At a sitting of the German Parliament, on December 6th, Herr von Varnbueler stated that "the Vatican was of opinion that, the less educated a priest, the more fitted he was for his vocation in life."