

WHAT OF THE NIGHT ?

In the city of Constantinople there stands an ancient tower, on whose top is stationed watchmen day and night to watch the city and its harbours. Strangers visiting the east make it a point to climb this tower, that from its commanding height they may view the city and its environs. The watchman scarcely deigns to notice the intruders as he keeps moving from one side to the other, sweeping with restless eye the whole circle under his care, from centre to circumference. In the clear atmosphere of the east, and over a city where fires are little used, his practised eye sees everything. Should a fire break out, in a moment he sees it, and from his commanding position, he quickly sounds the alarm.

How gladly would we, at the close of another year, were we able, climb a tower like this that would give us a clear and wide view of the Christian world. We climb our tower. We turn with anxious gaze to answer the question: watchman what of the city? and we see little but smoke and mist. Our position is not like the position of the watchmen on the top of the Seraskier Tower of Constantinople; but like the position of one who climbs to the top of St Paul's, London, to look out from its golden ball over a sea of fog, wherein the great city below lies buried.

There is, however, here and there a rent in the mantle of darkness, and we can see signs of danger—the smoke as of threatening fires.

One of the most gloomy and alarming sights that greets the eye of one looking out to-night over the Christian world, is the attitude taken by the Church of Rome towards Protestantism. It is not very long since we were wont to hear that Rome had changed, if not its *creed*, its *spirit*, and that henceforth it would be content to abandon its arrogant claims, and to

become after the fashion of this century, charitable and tolerant. That view of Popery has vanished like the baseless fabric of a vision. From the toothless jaws of Rome we hear to-day words as proud, pretensions as lofty, and curses as deep as when all the crowned heads of Europe lay at her feet. "She has," as Gladstone says, "refurbished and paraded anew every rusty tool she was fondly thought to have disused." Her language to every Christian communion in the world save her own is "what hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me." Let not the thought for a moment deceive us that Rome has ceased to be dangerous seeing she has become old, despised, and toothless. She has lost her temporal power, but she has not lost her ambition to rule over the kings of the earth, nor has she ceased attempting it. The Jesuits are busy in every way, and in every place, using the press, making captives of silly women, catching the young, mixing in politics, seeking, as is the opinion of Disraeli and other leading politicians, to bring over England to Rome, and involve Europe and the world once more in a war of religion and race.

But out of the darkness there breaks on the watchman's eye tokens of the coming day. If Rome is becoming narrower and fiercer, Protestantism is becoming broader, deeper, and more united. The Bible is being translated into every tongue, raised to its legitimate place in the school, and in the family. The press is gradually coming under the control of Christian men that hold orthodox views on the essentials of religion. The strife and suspicion that were wont to prevail between one Protestant denomination and another, are melting into forbearance and love without degenerating into indifference to truth. The preaching of the Evangelical Churches is becoming more Scriptural, and