

REVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR.

The beginning of last year found the Œcumenical Council sitting at Rome, the work of disestablishment thoroughly performed in Ireland, and the great causes of Spanish liberty and evangelization steadily progressing. It was thought that the development of these three remarkable phenomena in the religious world would be enough to fill the record of 1870; but, as time rolled on, it appeared that stranger things yet were in store, both for the world political and the world religious. Wars and rumours of wars have characterized the past year in a peculiar manner, not only as existing between nations, and to be settled *vi et armis*, but as between sects and parties, to be settled by the strife of words, the opposing forces of thought and prejudice.

In Britain, our attention has been called to the continued struggle between the orthodox party in the Church of England, on the one hand, and the opposite poles of Ritualism and Rationalism, on the other. The representative of the latter, or Broad Church party, is Mr. Voysey, whose trial recently took place before the Privy Council. The trial of Mr. Mackonochie, the representative Ritualist, has also, in all probability, come to an end by this time. It remains to be seen whether the Church of England can exercise discipline, or whether it is doomed ever to oscillate between these deadly extremes of error. In connection with High Churchism, the coquetting that has taken place between the Church of England and the corrupt Greek Church, in the person of the Archbishop of Syra, is a noteworthy, but not encouraging feature of the age. At the same time that this Church has been holding out a hand of welcome to idolaters and infidels, and, while it has been refusing to send missionaries to places in which Roman Catholics and Greek bishops, with apostolic succession to pretend to, are found, it has incurred the odium of disturbing the peace and harmony prevailing among the Christians of Madagascar and similar mission fields by appointing bishops to enter upon other men's labours. We fear that it will need more of the salt of evangelical doctrine and practice than there is in the Church of England, to keep the mass from corruption.

The Established Church of Scotland, at the meeting of General Assembly in June, decided, by a large majority, in favour of the abolition of patronage, the Duke of Argyll, one of the largest holders of patronage in the county, signifying his readiness to acquiesce in the decision of the Church. The union movement between the Free and United Presbyterian Churches drags its slow length along, the opposition being confined to a small party in the Free Church that has been alternately losing and gaining ground, in accordance, not so much with the main principle, or, indeed, any principle, as with the wisdom, or lack of it, with which the respective disputants have striven to advance their cause. South of the Tweed, however, better counsels prevail, and a union of the Presbyterian Church of England with the English Synod of the United Presbyterian Church seems not far distant.

In Ireland, steps have been taken to promote the stability of the disendowed Churches. The Irish Presbyterian Church has decided for commutation, and looks forward to a sustentation fund that will make the lowest stipend in the Church one hundred and thirty pounds sterling. There has also been a movement in favour of union with the other small Presbyterian bodies in Ireland, so as to have one Presbyterian Church for the kingdom. Missionary operations among Romanists are being greatly extended, and the influence of the priests is reported to be on the wane.