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"SPEAK UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THAT THEY GO FORWARD."—Exodus xiv, 15.

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Religious Intelligence.

SOCIAL IMPROVEMENT IN TURKEY.

Great changes have taken place in the internal policy of Turkey & our last publication. The possessions of the mosques have been declared the property of the State. It is scarcely possible to over estimate the importance of such a social revolution, and the probabilities are, that had not the fleets of Britain and France been near Constantinople, the attempt would never have been made, or if made, would have cost the Sultan his head. The Sheik-ul-Islam, the head of the Mahometan religion, was deposed because he would not give his consent to this measure, and without his consent it could not become law. A more pliable person was appointed in his place, who is prepared to give his sanction to those internal reforms, without which all the power of Europe cannot prevent Turkey from a rapid dissolution. The importance of this revolution is described in the *Times*:—

"The mosques and religious foundations of the Ottoman empire form important spiritual corporations, exercising an independent, legal, and theoretical power in the State. The Ulemas, or masters of the law and the Koran, are the sole possessors of the vast wealth belonging to these foundations, and at the same time, as the expounders of the faith and fundamental laws of Islam, they enjoy an authority to which the highest powers in the State have been compelled to bow. The insecurity of property under an arbitrary government and many other causes have induced Turkish landowners from generation to generation to assign over the fee simple of their estates to the mosques, reserving only the usufruct to themselves and their direct male descendants. Land thus held by the mosques or religious corporations became *wakof*, or, as it is termed in India, *ushk*, and is held for ever in mortmain. Such lands have hitherto been exempt from taxation and personal confiscation, and this tenure has so increased and so extended by the mere influence of duration and security in an empire where all other property is fluctuating and insecure that full threequarters of the soil of the Turkish dominions are said to be held in this manner. To dispossess these powerful corporations of landed property which they have held for centuries by the twofold bond of legal usage and religious veneration—to resume the direct authority of the Sultan over so large a portion of the lands of the empire, one-third of which was allotted to the mosques by Mahomet the conqueror—and to defy the whole power which the Ulemas and religious orders may be able to put forth in defence of their vested rights, is certainly one of the boldest measures ever taken in a great emergency.

"But we entertain no doubt that this resumption of lands is an indispensable preliminary to the real reform and progress of the country. Sooner or later in its history, every Christian State has undergone it, and the vast possessions which the superstition or the rapacity of former ages placed in the hands of the church have been restored to the common uses of society. The social revolution which is being effected in Turkey by

the emancipation of the Christians, and the establishment of a principle of equality between all races and religions of the empire, led by an inevitable consequence to the abolition of the exclusive supremacy which the Mussulmans have hitherto exercised over the largest portion of the soil, except in the Archipelago and in the provinces from which they are excluded by treaty. And, although changes of this nature are never accomplished without the dangers and sufferings inseparable from revolutions, the future strength and independence of Turkey depended on the introduction of a system totally distinct from that which has reduced so magnificent an empire to the verge of dissolution."

Another great change has been accomplished. The testimony of Christians is now placed upon an equality with that of Moslems, in all cases civil or criminal. This social degradation which has lain upon Christians since the destruction of the Greek empire four centuries ago, by the capture of Constantinople, has at last been removed. The firmness for establishing the equality of Christian evidence throughout the Turkish empire, with the regulations appended, lies now before us. We are not so sanguine as to suppose that a mere change in the law is sufficient to secure the practical objects desired. Reform is required with regard to the judges as well as with regard to the deposition of witnesses. But a most valuable step has been gained: and the very fact that it was only with the utmost reluctance, and almost by compulsion, that the fanatical Mahometans made the concession, is a proof of its value. Other reforms, however, are required, as to the condition of Christians. A capitation tax is enforced upon Christians from which Mahometans are exempted. This tax, productive as it is, must be abolished, and the finances of the State be recruited, in a manner less unjust and degrading. At present too, no Christian can hold property in the soil. He cannot possess a single rood of land. And what greater proof can be given of the barbarian character of Turkey than this, that millions of the best of its population are denied this first of social rights. Our blood and treasure cannot be expended on behalf of the Porte, unless her Christian subjects are placed, in all respects, upon an equality with the rest. Turkey cannot stand without these improvements, and what is not to be forgotten, she does not deserve to stand. The Euphrates must be dried up, the Mahometan power must be destroyed; but the benevolent mind will be much more gratified should it be accomplished by internal reformation, than by external violence.

PROTESTANTISM IN ITALY.—During the past year, says an exchange, 110 houses, with 4,500 rooms, have been built in Turin, Italy; and all this is attributable to the fact that the new constitution tolerates religious liberty. While every other Italian city is decaying like a corpse, Turin is growing under the new impulses of Protestantism like the green bay tree. The Waldenses are about opening in that city a Protestant temple, upon the very spot where the Dominicans burnt the bodies of the martyrs.

MISSIONARY CONVENTION IN NEW YORK.

The missionary meeting, designed for conference with the Rev. Dr. Duff, for which arrangements were made some time since, convened in the Lecture Room of Rev. Dr. Jas. W. Alexander's church, New York, on the 4th inst. Some two or three hundred of the prominent friends of Missions were present, including officers of the voluntary and various denominational organizations—even evangelical denominations being represented. It will be understood, that there was no design to break down denominational distinctions, nor to encourage the idea that all can be fused into one or more general organizations. The effect of this conference is precisely the reverse of this; it shows that however much the various branches of the church may insist upon carrying on their operations distinctly, they are yet aiming at the same great end, and can still confer with each other as to the most efficient methods of accomplishing it; in other words, that distinctive organizations do not argue uncharitableness, or hostility and conflict. The following is a condensed report of the proceedings:

"At 10 o'clock the meeting was organized by the Hon. Luther Bradsh, as the presiding officer, and the Rev. Mr. Patterson of Philadelphia, and John Paton of New York, as secretaries