

Dominion Churchman.

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THURSDAY, NOV. 30, 1876.

The Turkish Question still agitates the public mind of Europe, which looks now for war, now for peace, according as some little incident or some trifling utterance from a high functionary may seem to indicate. The Czar has written a most pacific note to the Queen, disavowing ideas of conquest, or of permanently occupying any part of the Turkish Empire. He expresses his surprise that the English people should be so suspicious about his intentions, and declares that his sole object is to secure a certain amount of freedom for the Christian provinces of Turkey. All at once, on the receipt of this note, a whole continent settles down into a feeling of comfortable satisfaction in the expectation of peace. When, suddenly, comes the news that Russia is marching her armies towards the frontier; and then everybody talks of war. The intelligence received states that "the Czar while pretending to be anxious for peace, is actively preparing for hostilities, and has actually ordered large bodies of troops to the front. Several important Russian ports have been obstructed by torpedoes, and merchant shipping have been instructed not to attempt entering such ports except in daylight, and then the aid of a guard-ship must be secured to pilot them into the harbors. The principal harbors thus obstructed are Sebastopol, Kertch and Odessa." And the despatch adds: "We may look for open hostilities at any moment." There is a great deal in both these aspects of the case that arises from misconception. On the one hand, the Czar's intentions and plans may be pacific enough, but the traditional policy of Russia is conquest; and it is more than thirty years ago that the *Moscow Gazette* declared that the next articles of peace between Russia and England would be signed at the gates of Calcutta. So that accustomed as the English people are to be frightened at shadows, the Czar need not wonder if a Russian "scare" is occasionally got up. On the other hand, the Czar may be anxious for peace, but when he found the Turks throwing obstacles in the way of an armistice, and actually fighting a pitched battle when pretending to be arranging for the suspension of arms, it became time for some one to interfere; and as both Austria and England

have left the cause of the Christian provinces to the protection of Russia, she has no alternative but to move forward in their defence. Let the English Government once show itself prepared to protect those provinces, and from that moment Russia has no excuse for interfering. At present, however, the power of England appears to be ranged on the other side. The latest intelligence states that Russia purposes to occupy Bulgaria temporarily; and that England consents.

The same cloud of uncertainty rests on the result of the Presidential campaign. All the States except Florida have been claimed and acknowledged by both parties; and even Florida is considered doubtful. There are also charges of contemplated fraud on one side and of contemplated violence on the other. To guard against fraud, a number of the leading men of both parties have posted off to New Orleans to inspect the counting of the votes. Should they find more votes in the ballot boxes than the whole number of inhabitants in any of the districts the result might be startling; but it would not be the first time such an event occurred. What most particularly occurs to us is the utter want of confidence the people of the United States have in their own institutions when those institutions are in the hands of another party than their own. A great clamour is raised for an improvement in their national elections—the abolition of the electoral college—an election of the President directly by the people—constitutional measures for the protection of the nation against fraud or violence—and everything else besides. So that we are driven to the conclusion that the Republican institutions of our neighbors have not reached that sublime state of absolute perfection some of them would have us believe.

More detailed accounts of the Arctic Expedition have reached us. After the ships were frozen up, sledge parties were formed, one of them was away in a direct line for the pole, but in seventy-two days only advanced seventy-three miles; which is only about forty miles further than was reached under Sir Edward Parry about fifty years ago. The highest altitude reached was 83deg., 20min., 26sec. The thermometer registered 72 degrees below zero. They came to the region of perpetual ice, which is a hundred feet thick, and is withal so rugged and piled up sometimes to the height of fifty feet that travelling over it is next to impossible. And yet the *Athenæum* remarks:—"We may be sure that neither scurvy nor ice, darkness nor polar sea, the antipodes of open, will scare our gallant countrymen from again attempting 'the one good thing of modern geography.'" The expedition registered the usual quantity of frost bites and scurvy. The loss is stated to be four men out of a hundred and twenty.

ADVENT SUNDAY.

The principal festivals the Church has adopted for the Christian year, are preceded by a season of preparation, and followed by a continuance of similar services to those of the festivals, which may serve as the echoes of their songs of triumph, and aid in deepening the sentiments and feelings the festivals themselves were designed to produce. Thus Christmas is preceded by the season of Advent, and is followed by twelve days of continued Christian joy which end with the Epiphany. The observance of Advent was, no doubt, introduced into the Church at the same time as that of Christmas, although the length of the season has been by no means uniform. In very ancient times it was certainly used for special prayer and discipline, and the Greek Church has always used a Lent before Christmas as well as before Easter. The principle generally carried out seems to have been to increase the number of solemn services generally adopted, and to maintain a greater reserve in the use of lawful indulgences. Such an observance of the season commends itself as one which will form a fitting introduction to the joy of Christmas, and which will also be consistent with that contemplation of our Lord's Second Advent, which has always been, more or less, associated with his first appearance. Indeed, Advent is to Christmas what St. John the Baptist was to the First coming of our Lord, and what the Christian Ministry is to His Second and more glorious Advent.

In this season we are taught to look forward to the glory of Messiah; and the contemplation of this will naturally produce feelings of self-abasement. Before coming to Bethlehem, and seeing the Holy child in the manger, we are bidden to gaze on the splendor which belongs to Him: and therefore the four Sundays in Advent set forth by the Holy Scriptures appointed for them, the majesty of our Lord's Person and Kingdom. The Festival of the Nativity is to represent to us the lowliness to which the Eternal God condescended to stoop in becoming man; and we begin at that time the particular observance of each great act in the mystery of the Incarnation. And before we come to the contemplation of the man Christ Jesus as the Babe of the humble Virgin, we are directed to prepare our hearts and minds for a proper estimate of the wondrous mystery by dwelling on the keynote which sounds in our ears through Advent:—"Behold thy King cometh;" a meek and helpless Babe, but yet Divine. The first Advent was one of humiliation and grace: the second will be one of glory and judgment. "The similarity of each song of the Church for each Advent is truly remarkable. For the one, we sing:—"Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the Highest,"