

THE UNITED STATES.

The Centennial year, also a Presidential one, that was to be so celebrated, and to work such wonders, at least in a commercial point of view, has come; and in four days more, it will have gone. As for the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia, held during a considerable portion of the year to commemorate the beginning of the United States' rebellion against Great Britain a century ago, it has neither been a failure nor has it been so successful as was expected. Not many crowned heads were there: we remember only the name of the Emperor of Brazil—royalty not having yet been universally schooled into, the principle that rebellion is the highest political virtue hitherto discovered. A vast pile of machinery and other products of manufactures and of nature were exhibited. Some magnificent pictures from great Britain, Belgium and Germany, were also there—not forgetting some very good ones from Canada. There was likewise "an unlimited amount of crockery, calico, tin pans, clothes-wringers, sewing machines", and everything in fact except the hundred-ton gun and the iron-clad. The jealousy of New York, on account of the locality selected for the exhibition, led to some of the finest specimens of human art being retained in the "Empire City," so as to cause the boast that the greatest attractions were to be found there. The triumph of a century's progress was also considerably diminished by the revelations which the year has produced of some of the most extensive fraudulent transactions ever known, and which threatened to implicate the highest functionaries of the state. The Presidential election too, has brought to light a number of the inherent defects of the constitution of a people who imagined they had reached perfection before their swaddling clothes had been properly arranged. The contest which should have been *virtually* decided nearly a couple of months ago, has not yet been settled: accusations and counter accusations being made of the most gigantic system of electioneering fraud and intimidation ever known. In the mean time, the state of things in the South, which any other people would call anarchy, is of so serious a character, that it would without a doubt, have expanded itself into a civil war some time ago, had a little longer space elapsed since the disasters of the last one: and what the result may yet be in this respect, is as uncertain as the name of the next President.

Under influences so unfavorable, and with the public mind in so great a ferment on political subjects, the Church has nevertheless made considerable progress. With this exception, we may confidently affirm that, although the United States, during the last hundred years, have done a great deal towards the advancement of humanity in converting the wilderness into habitable dwelling places, they have not advanced a single step in social or political progress. Whatever advances the

masses have made in one or other of these respects, have been made under the older Governments of Europe—where social freedom is not unbridled licence, and where political liberty is not mob-law.

THE "DOMINION CHURCHMAN"

has been successful in an unprecedented degree, for any Church paper hitherto attempted in this country. We need only say that increased efforts will be made to sustain it as the organ of the whole church for every Diocese of the Dominion; and from our experience during the year, we have every reason to believe that our efforts will be duly appreciated and well sustained.

THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

The joyous character of the festival of Christmas is still maintained; and that this Sunday may be the more unmistakably marked with the same or kindred features, the Christmas Collect is repeated. Beautiful as it is, so expressive, so full of meaning, it can never tire by repetition, nor can its petitions ever become unsuitable to the necessities of human nature: "Grant that we, being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by Thy Holy Spirit."

The Epistle and Gospel present the Saviour under a new aspect. In those for Christmas Day we have His Divine nature, and his condescension in taking our nature upon Him: but in those for this Sunday, we have presented to us the exaltation of human nature—the sons of men becoming the sons of God, through the humiliation of Christ. We are heirs of God through Christ, because of the fulfilment of this promise, "He shall save His people from their sins."

The lessons are from the last utterances of the prophet Isaiah, pointing out the prosperity and the peace of Jerusalem in the days of Messiah. The peace and security to be fully enjoyed by the Church in the latter days, when "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together," were remarkably foreshadowed when Christ was born in Bethlehem. Not only was the whole Empire of Rome in a state of the profoundest tranquility it had ever known, but the kingdom of Parthia was so quiet that to this day we are in doubt who was their monarch at that period. Even the Scythian tribes were undisturbed. While at this very time, in a region scarcely known at all in the west, in China, "the Valley of the Sun," "the Middle Kingdom," a peaceful but firm and powerful rule was extended across the vast tracts of Asia, from the Pacific Ocean to the Caspian Sea, under the beneficent sway of a monarch named *Ping-ti*, a name which means, "*The Emperor Peace*."

THE CIRCUMCISION.

The Church does not celebrate the first of January as the riotous festival of the Saturnalia kept by the Romans, nor

merely as the New Year's Day of the moderns, but as the festival of the circumcision of our Lord Jesus Christ; and in this way only have the book of Common Prayer, and the constant teaching of the Reformers led us to observe it. It belongs to the Incarnation. To use the words of a celebrated Liturgical writer:—January 1st was never in any way connected with the opening of the Christian year; and the religious observance of this day has never received any sanction from the Church, except as the octave of Christmas, and the Feast of the Circumcision. The spiritual "point" of the season all gathers about Christmas; and, as the modern New Year's Day, is merely conventionally so, (New Year's Day being on the 25th of March, until a hundred and fourteen years ago), there is no reason why it should be allowed at all to dim the lustre of a day so important to all persons, and all ages, as Christmas Day. The night meetings or "watch-nights" as they are called, are entirely unsuitable to the kind of observance the Church contemplates. The collect very forcibly gives the lessons to be learned in connection with the day.

THE EPIPHANY.

The cycle of the Festivals of our Lord is arranged so as to memorialize before God the successive leading points of our Lord's life and acts, in the order contained in the two clauses of the Litany: "By the mystery of thy Holy Incarnation," &c. Hence the Epiphany was originally regarded as that part of the Christmas Festival on which was commemorated the Baptism of the Lord Jesus. It appears to have begun to be observed in memory of our Lord's manifestation to the Eastern Magi, about the fourth century, in the Western Church. This feature, however, never superseded the original idea. The Oriental Church still retains the primitive name of the Day, "Theophany."

There is an instructive unity about the Scriptures used on the Epiphany. The first lesson for Mattins is Isaiah lx. the same which occurs on Christmas eve. It begins with a proclamation of the Lord as an everlasting light. It also contains the prophecy which began to be fulfilled by the adoration of the Magi, as given in the gospel of the day: "The Gentiles shall come to Thy light;" and the Epistle is an expansion of this verse, showing how the Light of Christ is manifested to the world, in and by the Church. The second morning Lesson contains the original idea of the Festival, the manifestation of the Lord's Divine Sonship at His Baptism. The first Lesson at Evensong sets forth the joy of the Church, and the glory imparted by the coming of her Light, so that each phase of this great Festival is presented on the day itself, and the subsequent Sundays have a systematic relation to the Festival after which they are named.

It has been suggested that the star which appeared to the wise men in the East may have been the glorious light