

SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

IN lands that have been under the sway of Rome, her power is at present growing less, as witness France, Italy, etc. In Britain, where the Reformation long ago took root, to the extent even of placing Roman Catholics for a time under civil disabilities, the power of that church is steadily increasing, and she is stronger than ever before since Reformation times.

What mean these signs. Are they but different stages in great cyclic movements of men and nations? Does not history, taking a circle of centuries for its revolution, seem in this matter to repeat itself? Is it not on this wise? *e.g.* :—

Rome—not the people but the hierarchy—has supreme power in a country. She tolerates no other faith. She rules with a rod of iron. She keeps the people in ignorance and bondage. At length, unable longer to endure, they break their bonds, more or less suddenly, and embrace either a purer faith or no faith, according to the agencies effecting the revolution. Freedom is established. Rome, unable to help herself, accepts the changed conditions, claims toleration because it is the principle of Protestantism, and sets to work in her own way to regain in some measure her power.

Inch by inch, using every agency that suits her purpose, but ever keeping the one end in view, she presses steadily on. Generations that knew the tyranny have long since passed away. History is forgotten. Step by step she wins her way—by bribe, by threat, by vote—holding an ever growing balance of power, until at length, with gloved but iron hand, she rules once more in municipal, provincial and national affairs.

Some years since, at the great Catholic Council in Baltimore, she set herself to more vigorous work in the United States. A bureau was established at Washington, and her influence has been ever since felt with increasing power in the national government.

With regard to the same tendency in Britain, the *Glasgow Christian Leader* says:

"The time was—and that not long ago—when the suggestion, that the Protestantism of Britain was in danger, would have evoked a smile of pitying incredulity. The light of the nineteenth century was regarded as a sufficient answer. With all our education, and our scientific progress, spiritual prostration before the antiquated and discredited bugbear of the Vatican was fondly believed to be outside the bounds of all that was probable.

That self-confidence has given place in many to genuine alarm. Events now move with rapid step, and forces that work far-reaching change have a fashion of sweeping in with an ugly rush that bears down all opposition. No one can be blind to the fact that our attitude as a people towards the Pope and Roman Catholicism is radically altered. A penny weekly, which seeks to secure a wide popularity, comes out, in its first number, with two articles on the Pope! No paper seeking to ingratiate itself with the people would have done that even five years ago, unless it had been edited by a madman.

Another indication is the manner in which the Pope's Encyclical has been received by the British press. The language used reminds one of nothing so much as the kissing of the Pope's toe."

C. E. Convention. At Washington, D. C., 14-20 July, the world's C. E. hosts met in grand convention. The attendance was 20,000 as against 50,000 last year at Boston. In three mammoth tents, "Washington," "Williston," and "Endeavor," and in some twenty Churches, the meetings were held. In this way no one could get more than a fragment of the whole. In spiritual power and fervor the tone of the meeting was high. "Spiritual power" is the motto given for the coming year.

Inspiring as are such gatherings, they are but the resting places by the way. The work for Christ and the Church is done in the heart alone with God; in the family; in the individual society or Church. But few can shine in great conventions, and shining there is in the eyes of men; whosoever will may shine in his place of life, with whatsoever things are pure, and true, and lovely, and of good report, and this shining is not only before men but in the sight of God. The meeting that truly fills with the Spirit is not the meeting with twenty thousand poor weak mortals like ourselves; but the meeting alone with the Holy Spirit, which costs no money nor travel, nor time, nor toil; which is within reach of the poorest, the busiest, the lowliest. O, for more such conventions of two, then would our Christian hosts of every name be strong in power, bright with beauty, an army of the Lord.

Worse than Waste. Britain's war expenditure is sometimes condemned, both because of its object and its amount. The object, however, is not without its good. It has been one great agency in putting down oppression, and in opening up the world to liberty and the Gospel, and the amount is small, compared with another expenditure which is wholly bad, worse than wasted, Britain's bill for strong drink—about two millions of dollars per day, besides all the indirect loss and ruin which it causes.

Last year it amounted to £142,000,000, or \$710,000,000, being an increase of £3,676,000, or \$18,380,000, over the previous year. The increase alone is several millions more than the income of all the missionary societies of the world. If for twenty years the amount now spent for strong drink could be wholly diverted from that channel and devoted to the world's evangelization, what a world twenty years hence would see! What a lessening of poverty, want, suffering at home, and what an uplifting from sin and misery in heathen lands!

But it cannot be. Our part is working, not dreaming, and one task, long and hard, before the Christian Church, is the stoppage of that traffic which, more than any other one cause, hinders the Kingdom of Christ; stopping it by moral suasion, where such means will do it, and by legal suasion where moral will not work.