

The Dominion Parliament has been further prorogued till February the 8th.

Greece has expressed to the European powers satisfaction at the initiative taken by the Porte in appointing commissioners to negotiate upon the frontier question. Greece will come to an understanding with Turkey without mediation.

The Bishop of Durham being disabled by an incurable complaint from discharging the duties of his office, has resigned, and will not accept a retiring pension.

It is believed in Berlin that negotiations are still pending in order to secure a joint occupation of Bulgarian districts in the event of disturbances after the Russian evacuation. Russia might not agree to this arrangement, but that circumstance would not prevent the other powers from acting. As soon as order is restored in Eastern Roumelia, the Russians have announced their intention to retire therefrom.

Failures to a considerable extent are still taking place in Great Britain. One in Bristol is reported with liabilities of more than sixty thousand pounds sterling; and another in Wales, which will considerably increase the liabilities of the West of England and South Wales District Bank.

The St. Gothard tunnel is approaching completion. Nearly eleven thousand yards of the mountain have been pierced and less than two thousand remain to be got through.

The distress in various parts of Great Britain is a subject of considerable anxiety. At Glasgow the distress is unexampled. The streets are swarming with starving men, women and children. In Aberdeen, Forfar and Dumfermline, private and public charity combined is insufficient for the removal of the distress. The working classes in and near Liverpool are enduring more privation than they have done for some years. At Bristol large numbers are unemployed and there is much suffering. From Wolverhampton we learn that much distress prevails throughout the south of Staffordshire, and relief has to be distributed to a large extent. At Manchester vast numbers are suffering keenly. Great want is also felt throughout North Staffordshire.

THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST.

IN the Western world, more than a couple of thousand years ago, the first of January was devoted to purposes of dissipation of an extremely unhallowed character, and a great deal of the modern *use* on that day and on the previous night not only had a heathen origin, but is still of a thoroughly heathen character. It is not, therefore, without great significance that the Church celebrates on this day a festival which brings before us in the strongest light the fact that when Messiah came into the world, albeit his object was to free men from thralldom, yet as our Exemplar he submitted to the requirements of law; and the Church has sanctified this day to the demands of purity and holiness by the religious observances she has required of us at this time.

It becomes increasingly necessary that we should bear in mind that the Church's year began on the First Sunday in Advent, and that, in her estimation, the first day of January, except as being included in the Christmas festival, possesses a very subordinate character, and therefore as a separate and distinct day of rejoicing, it occupies a very minor position in the Church's calendar.

It brings prominently before us in an early part of the Christian year the character of the Christian religion as one entirely separated from the superstitions and indulgences of paganism, and introduces us to a system equally antagonistic to the world, the flesh, and the devil. And in this way we may observe it as forming a part of the Christmas festival, and assisting us to comprehend and to value the blessings of our holy religion, which aims at separating us from all that has a tendency to hurt us in body and soul, here and hereafter, and to make us progress in the paths of purity and peace throughout the entire course of our mortal existence.

We are taught that restraint is an essential principle of the highest and the noblest, the freest and the most heavenly system ever brought into the world;—that the conquest of evil is necessary to any measure of ultimate peace, and happiness for man. According to the Christian revelation, evil is the perversion of God's highest and best gifts to created intelligences; it is turning His most conspicuous instances of generosity and goodness against Himself, and is of all things in the universe the most destructive to man's happiness, now and for ever. It had its first place and its primeval conquests among a race of beings who are in all respects our superiors in strength and intelligence. Evil is a mighty tradition coming to us men from another world, and gathering strength as it passes across the centuries of human history, and marshalling in its enthusiastic service millions of human intellects and human wills, as well as multitudes of wills and intellects which are keen, and stronger than any that belong to man. The Jewish rite practised at an early age committed its votaries to a system intended to neutralize some of this evil. Christ submitted to the rite in token that He came to fulfil the whole law, and to incorporate its principles into His own system. And the Church has brought the commemoration of it within the range of our hallowed festivities connected with Messiah's first appearance on earth, in a way that indicates the nature of the Christian's warfare through life—namely, that for which in the Sacrament of Baptism (called by St. Paul the circumcision of Christ) the Cross is signed on his brow, "in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end."

As the Festival of the Epiphany will fall on Monday, the Collect, Epistle and Gospel for the Circumcision will be used on Sunday next.

THE EPIPHANY.

THE Festival which commemorates the visit of the Eastern Sages to the Infant Saviour in His home in Bethlehem, naturally brings before us the extension of the blessings of Revelation to the Gentile world, in the fulness of grace and mercy treasured up in the Christian religion for the entire family of man. And so the season may well be regarded at the special portion of the Church's year in which the enterprise of Missionary operations may most appropriately be urged. The expansiveness of the Christian Religion was indicated by the coming of the Magi to the Star of Bethlehem, as it was one of the latest manifestations of the Saviour's life: "Goye therefore and disciple all nations," was his final charge. In whatever variety of language that charge was given, as recorded by the different evangelists—some being more copious than others, but all consonant with

themselves—there was one invariable principle contained in it as the sum and substance of the commission: Repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in His name, *among all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem. And that this principle was to be observed, and that this commission was to be given to those who in future ages should be the successors of the Twelve, and who should thus enter into the labors and the office of those first preachers of Christianity, is abundantly evident from the promise which guarantees their success: "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The obligation to exhibit salvation to nations yet unsubdued by the Gospel is just as binding upon us as it was upon them; since, if any commission to preach the Gospel belongs to men in the present day, or in any age subsequent to that of the first apostles, it must be charged with the conditions and character of the original commission—neither that commission nor its obligations being at any time repealed. The original authority, the power of binding and loosing, and the obligations to extend the doctrines of the Cross, including the Sacraments of the Church, go down to the latest generations. If we maintain the perpetuity of the Christian Ministry, we must hold it with all its primitive intentions and appointments; and these constitute the very essence of the missionary spirit.

In diffusing the blessings of the Gospel, the Church in her corporate, which is her real capacity, has authority to expect the largest measure of miraculous aid from above; and in no part of her march onward can she advance a step in the direction of her Lord, without his own immediate interference and blessing. And, though from the beginning of her career, clouds and darkness have most frequently hovered round her path, and sometimes discord has raged within, yet the eye of faith can discern the distant future covered with the highest resplendence of the Sun of Righteousness, and decked with the unapproachable loveliness of heavenly beauty.

As an incentive to Missionary effort, we should remember, in the language of one of the most eloquent writers of the last generation that, "The beginnings were miraculous, but the close shall be inconceivable. Who, that had seen the little band of brothers issuing from the upper chamber, in all the simplicity of their character, unarmed, unpatronized, could have imagined that the throne of the Cæsars should feel their power, and veil its glory before them; and that the stupendous structure of paganism, reared by philosophy, cemented by habit, and upon which state policy had built its power and authority, should vanish like a morning cloud as they advanced? Yet, so it was: so went forth the word of salvation, as the day breaks—its first beam distinguishing itself by its purity, from the lamp of reason and the torch of philosophy; but wherever it poured its meridian splendour, eclipsing all light in its surpassing radiance. So it grew, as the mustard seed, 'which indeed is the smallest of all seeds;' but, when its maturity shall have come, not the 'birds of the air,' but all nations of the earth shall find repose under its shadow. So it rose, as the fountain rises,—a spring of living water gushing forth; but now it is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God; and in the fulness of time its healing waters shall flow over all the kingdoms of the world. Its voice is more powerful than the thunder, to which science can easily point out the bounds assigned; and it is softer than the gale of the summer evening. It would seem as though the universe were constructed to convey its sound into all lands: it was