

VIII.—EDITORIAL NOTES ON CURRENT TOPICS.

THE INDIAN SCHOOL QUESTION.

THE Fifth Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Indian Rights Association, from the pen of Mr. James B. Harrison, is a vigorous and outspoken contribution to the literature of the subject and should be widely circulated and duly considered. It justly characterizes the recent orders of the Indian Bureau as "unintelligent, arbitrary, despotic and unstatesmanlike, merely a blow at missionary work. There is no reason to suppose that a single Indian anywhere will ever learn ten words more of English by reason of these orders. There is, indeed, no provision made by the government for any increase of facilities in the study of English. The damage to the missionary work produced by these orders is their sole result. The orders should be distinctly and wholly revoked and withdrawn. It is not necessary that the missionaries and churches should submit. If they will publish the facts fully, the orders will be revoked. The facts must come to light. Even the people of the country will have something to say."

No one can read this report without having his heart stirred with indignation at the condition of Indian affairs, through the unfitness of the Indian Bureau. The *Nation* says:

"The Indian Bureau appears to have made a serious blunder. Government has no moral right to order peremptorily that missionary societies which maintain schools in many places without assistance from the Federal treasury shall cease using the Indian language."

The religious and missionary press, with almost entire unanimity, has condemned the policy and arbitrary edict of government, and the Philadelphia Annual Conference of the M. E. Church adopted very strong resolutions on the subject. All our ecclesiastical and missionary societies should follow suit and cease not to protest till their demand shall be heeded. The President has not revoked the obnoxious orders; the slight modification conceded does not touch the essential iniquity. And his recommendation of a Commission, one-half to be army officers, to manage the Indians, gives no promise of relief, but the contrary. The *Interior* well puts the case:

"There are two objections to this—one of principle, and one of policy. The principle involved is that it is a violation of a fundamental right of civil and religious liberty. The policy involved is that the scrambling politicians who climb into such positions are not, as a rule, the kind of men to be intrusted with educational and moral interests. We never would have believed that this piece of utterly indefensible tyranny would have been permitted to remain so long in force. Some one who has the ear of the President ought to suggest to him that his friendship is about to go into action, and that it is high time for him to clear his decks."

The *Independent* says:

"There was a discussion recently among some

young Dakota Indians, who are attending school, on the question 'Which has done the more good for us, the Catholic or the Protestant church?' The Protestants, it is said, beat their opponents. One of them was asked how they won. He said, 'I showed them the Bible in Dakota and read to them in their own tongue. I showed them a letter from an absent young man written in Dakota, which all could understand when I read it, and I said, "Our religion gave us a written language and the Bible." What has your religion given to our people?' Is not this pretty fair reasoning for a man who, according to Commissioner Atkins, has no language, only a barbarous dialect? The promised concessions of the Interior Department have just reached the missionaries among the Dakotas, two months after they were issued. Under date of Feb. 11 Commissioner Atkins added another concession to those of Jan. 18, allowing Indians to possess and use the Bible in the vernacular, and allowing a 'limited theological class' of Indian young men to be trained in the vernacular in any purely missionary school supported exclusively by missionary societies, provided they are to devote themselves exclusively to preaching. These concessions, he it remembers, are from the *Interior Department of the Republic of the United States, not from the Interior Department of the government of the Czar, and they apply to our Indians, and not to the Poles of Russia.*"

The President's long reply to the Philadelphia Conference, while kind in spirit, gives evidence that he has not studied the matter with his wonted care and clearness and does not comprehend the problem in all its aspects.

We commend to our readers the letters from distinguished civilians, lawyers and divines, given in our International Department (pp. 462-9), in relation to this subject.—J. M. S.

A WORD to our subscribers. We are glad to be able to say that in the future there will be no occasion for delay in receiving THE REVIEW when ordered. The demand for it so greatly exceeded the faith of our publishers at the start, and even down to a recent date, that they failed to make due provision for the supply. Already *five editions of the January number, three of the February and two of the March* have been printed, and the demand does not abate. But this experience sufficed to show them the necessity of a much larger edition of succeeding numbers, so that in the future they will be able promptly to supply the work to all who apply. Every number is stereotyped, so that THE REVIEW can be had from January. Our thanks are due to the press and to our many friends in all parts of the field for their hearty commendation and words of cheer.—J. M. S.