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"SPEAK UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THAT THEY GO FORWARD."—Exodus xiv., 15.

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Religious Intelligence.

CONTINENT OF EUROPE.

From information recently published, chiefly through the medium of the Evangelical Alliance, or the very useful monthly periodical conducted under its auspices, we collect a few facts respecting the religious condition of some of the continental countries, sufficient to awaken sympathy, or to create hope, in all the friends of truth.

In *Russia* the most remarkable feature in the ecclesiastical matters of late has been the efforts, honourable or dishonourable, to bring into conformity with the national religion all within the empire who profess any other creed. These efforts have attracted notice especially in the western provinces, which being originally German, were protestant in religious profession. Among these the proselytism has had a success much to be deplored. Because, although it must have been a merely nominal protestantism which they could renounce, in order to embrace, for the sake of worldly advantage, the grotesque rites of the Russian Church, yet under any modification of protestantism, they were nearer the Bible, and had more liberty of conscience, than in a church nothing behind that of Rome in corruption and intolerance. From an official report presented to the Emperor by his home secretary for the year 1849, it appears that in the course of that year there joined the Russian Church 2703 Protestants, 1473 Romanists, 1787 Jews, 11 Armenians, besides 1150 heathens, and 828 Mohammedans.

In *Sweden*, where Protestantism under a Lutheran form has long been degraded by intolerance, a struggle for religious freedom has commenced, which now bids fair to gain speedily its objects. The state church there, like other state churches having the power, has of late been showing much zeal in putting down conventicles and Bible expositions, and religious meetings conducted by laymen; while very forbearing as to the moral character, and religious sentiment of its own clergy, provided they do not greatly offend public decency by their conduct. But a "Society for Religious Liberty" has at length been organised, and is taking cautious, but decisive, measures. Religious liberty will thus soon become a matter of general discussion in the country. One great meeting was held to promote it in 1850, another in 1851, a third was announced for 1852, of a character likely to be more influential than either of the preceding, and sufficient to awaken much alarm in the state church. This important meeting was held on the 20th of July last, at Helsingborg, a town adjoining the country of Denmark, where the meeting of the previous year had also been held. No disturbance was given to the meeting by the authorities. It was attended by forty clergymen, and as many school masters, besides many of the nobility of Sweden, ladies of rank, and others of the middle and agricultural classes. Among various subjects for consideration previously arranged, that on the state of religious liberty in the country occasioned a very animated discussion. It was put in these terms—"What is the amount of religious liberty guaranteed to Swedish citizens by the 16th paragraph of the 'Form of Government?'" An old law did exist which forbade all meetings in private houses for reading or singing, or preaching the Gospel; under the authority of which law—although, as has now turned out, now abrogated—the persecution of all meetings for cultivating vital religion has been perpetrated.

To a Roman Catholic priest they have been indebted for bringing to light that more recent article of the Swedish constitution which secures to all liberty of conscience in religion. In an action brought against this Romish priest by the consistory of Stockholm regarding proselytizing, the advocate employed by the priest, reminded the court, that religious liberty was now the law of the country! The fact was this, that the existing constitution or form of government was drawn up in 1809, after the dethronement of Gustavus IV., when a spirit of liberty was generally aroused in the country. And in this constitution the 16th paragraph runs thus—"The king shall not force any man's conscience, nor suffer it to be forced; but shall protect every one in the free exercise of his religion, so long as he does not disturb the peace of society, nor occasion public scandal." But when Bernadotte, in 1810, became crown prince, his policy being to secure the support for his throne of the hierarchy and nobility, this law, which secured religious liberty, was allowed to lie dormant, and was forgotten; no one ventured to name it, or, during the last thirty years, even remembered it. Now it is brought under notice, and the public prosecutor in the action against the priest, admitted in his closing appeal, that by that article in the constitution, religious liberty was now the law of the land; but stated, that as this law had not hitherto been practically applied, he was necessitated to crave that the sanctions of the older laws against proselytizing be carried into effect. This was looked for discovery has given to the friends of religious liberty in Sweden a feeling of exultation. In the meeting at Helsingborg, it appeared like a hand from the clouds extended for their help; and the meeting loudly proclaimed the validity of this article of the constitution. They made their appeal to the judges of the land; and claimed their decision in favour of that religious liberty, which it was now evident that Sweden, *de jure*, possessed. A petition was prepared for general signature, praying his majesty the king to grant the same religious liberty here, as had been for several years granted to Norway, namely,—1st, Liberty to hold religious meetings in private houses. 2d, That he would formally repeal the old law which sentenced Swedish subjects to banishment, if they leave the communion of the Lutheran church. This new phase which the question has assumed in the land, has awakened general terror among the conservatives, and especially among the senior clergy. They profess to consider the whole of Christendom in danger, according to the usual outcry of state priests, when their own monopoly, or their ecclesiastical pre-eminence, is threatened.

In *France*, the political changes which have been, and are still in progress, are to some extent not encouraging to the friends of the Gospel in that country; but still they allow much ground for hope and perseverance. The Roman Catholic clergy, no doubt, have a large measure of countenance from the public authorities; but it would be an error to estimate highly their power over the masses, with whom they no longer possess much of either spiritual or moral influence. And should another revolution occur in France, which can scarcely be at any great distance, the Roman Catholic clergy, already gravely compromised in public opinion, will experience, with fearful retribution, disastrous effects of the storms which are at this moment accumulating over the country. Since the 25th of last March, the Protestant churches of France have been placed under a new law as regards their organisation; which law has been received by these churches generally with satisfaction; although it cannot be viewed favourably by those who wish religion to be exempted from all state connection. A permanent central council at Paris is charged to represent these churches officially, in their communications with the government; and by means of it the Protestants will be able to cause their grievances, as well as suggestions and requests, to be heard; a privilege which, it is thought, may in a great many cases afford immense advantage. The men who compose this council are all taken from the leading Protestants; and it is presided over by one who is entitled to the highest confidence of all the friends of evangelical truth. In Paris, a city mission has been established in the course of the year, under an association of young men, several of whom are distinguished by eminent piety, and have devoted themselves zealously to the work. A number of evangelists and colporteurs have also been recently set to work in the capital; and a Sunday school association has been formed. A sisterhood of Protestant ladies of charity has also been established, on whom will devolve the charge of visiting the sick in the hospitals of the capital. And it is now ruled that these ladies shall have free access to all the hospitals; and it is even expected that this license will be extend-