

RELIGIOUS AND OTHER LIBERTY IN THE TRANSVAAL.



HE political kaleidoscope has undergone some remarkable changes during the past year, and the end is not yet. We have had in rapid succession the war between China and Japan, the Nicaraguan incident, the Venezuelan dispute involving the friendly relations previously existing between the United States and Great Britain, and then a new phase of the everlasting Egyptian question in the proposed re-conquering of the Soudan. All these political disturbances were—and still are—fraught with consequences of the gravest import to the civilized world, for every one of them threatened to produce international complications that would plunge Europe, and perhaps America, into that awful struggle, so long expected, so much dreaded, and so seemingly inevitable. All these difficulties were as a little spark by which a ruin-wreaking conflagration might easily have been enkindled.

But of all recent international disputes, that arising from the ill-advised and ill-fated invasion of the Transvaal by Dr. Jameson and his troopers is in every way the most momentous. It threatened the independence of a sovereign state and disturbed the peace of a sturdy and self-reliant people; it gave occasion to the German Emperor to make the most inexplicable mistake of his rather quixotic career; most serious result of all, it aroused the warlike spirit of the British nation—and the British are very formidable foes when they take the field in good earnest.

There has been a vast deal of honest sympathy thrown away on the Boers. Of course no fair-minded man can approve Jameson's raid or the shameless conspiracy that led up to it. But it is almost time that the stiff-necked, exclusive and prejudiced Dutchmen who rule the Transvaal were brought to a sense of their duty.

In no other part of the world where constitutional government prevails is a large, influential and law-abiding portion of the population so shamefully deprived of their civil and religious rights and liberties as in the dominion of President Kruger, and it is scarcely possible that so discreditable a state of affairs can be long allowed to continue.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate have been doing missionary labor on an extensive scale and in large numbers for almost fifty years in South Africa. Their jurisdiction includes all the Catholics of Natal, Orange Free State, Bechuanaland, Basutoland and the Transvaal, and the spiritual wants of the faithful in these countries are attended to by two Bishops, two Prefects Apostolic and about one hundred missionaries. Very Rev. Father Schoch, O.M.I., is Prefect Apostolic of the Transvaal. His long experience, practical wisdom and marked prudence have made him a power in his adopted country. From an extremely interesting letter which he recently wrote to the *Missionary Record* of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, we quote the following paragraphs:—

The Transvaal is becoming an important part of the world. Within less than two months we had a political crisis, gave occasion to Jameson's ride, stirred up a deal of hot feelings in Europe, and had a dynamite explosion whereby about 70 persons were killed, some 200 wounded and about 1,500 rendered homeless.

The political question and Jameson's ride need not be treated here. Two things are certain: first, we have mischief-makers in this country: if the Transvaaler, the Uitlander, and the English government alone were at work, a satisfactory settlement would easily be reached; and secondly, unless a *modus vivendi* satisfactory to both Boer and Uitlander be found, there will never be lasting peace in this country. The Uitlander has real grievances and does not want to rob the Boer of his rights.

About the position of the Catholic Church here, many things more or less accurate have been written. The facts are these:

(1.) By the Grondwet and the London Convention freedom is granted to every form of religion; we can build churches, schools, orphanages, etc.,