

## Current Topics.



WHO'LL GET THE "WISH"? THE EASTERN QUESTION WILL EVENTUALLY COME TO THIS.—*The Journal, Chicago.*

## THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH.

The greatest peril to the Church of the future, we apprehend, is not from Infidelity, or Free Thought, as in the eighteenth century, nor from opposition and persecution, as in the first three centuries, and at sundry times since, but from conformity to the world and a consequent lowering of her spiritual life. The Emperor Constantine was really a greater enemy to Christianity than the persecuting monster whom he overthrew. Under ten persecutions the early Church, like the Israelites in Egypt, the more it was oppressed, the more it multiplied and grew. But raised to the purple and throned in power, it lost its primitive purity and sank, at times, to a depth of corruption but little better than the paganism which it supplanted.

From one danger, indeed, the Church of the future will be free. It will not be a State Church, nor will it exercise political power. Even that Church which for long centuries dominated Christendom, and placed her foot upon the neck of kings, has now no more political power in her ancient seat of empire than the weakest of sects. Outside of the walls

of the Vatican its authority is defied, and when an attempt was made to gain political influence from the midnight burial of Pope Pius IX., the remains of the last temporal sovereign of a mighty line of Pontiffs narrowly escaped being hurled—a sacrifice to the popular hatred—into the Tiber. "A free Church in a free State," the dream and aspiration of Cavour, is now a fixed fact in Italy.

But we are thinking rather of the peril of evangelical Churches, and especially of Methodism, in English-speaking lands. The day of the early probation of Methodism when, winnowed by the fan of persecution, the false and fickle fell off, the tried and true alone remained, has passed away. No Church in Christendom exhibits such a development from a despised and persecuted sect, everywhere spoken against, to a world-wide organization of which all men speak well. Methodism is no longer the Church chiefly of the poor, but also very largely of the rich. Witty novelists can no longer describe its services as confined to little Bethels and Ebenezers in narrow lanes. It has, especially in the New World, its stately and magnificent churches, the peers of