

REVIEWS AND NOTICES OF BOOKS.

"SIGNS OF THE TIMES." Letters to Ernst Moritz Arndt, on the dangers to religious liberty in the present state of the world, by CHRISTIAN CHARLES JOSIAS BUNSEN, D. D., D. C. L., &c.—*New York, Harper & Brothers; Montreal, B. Dawson.*

This is one of many remarkable books from the pen of the illustrious Chevalier Bunsen, late Prussian Ambassador at the Court of England. He resided for a period of fourteen years in London, and we began to look upon him as one of our own venerable fathers. The Oriental question, however, on which he embraced the views of the Allies, and in which Prussia took so pusillanimous a part, led to his retirement from office, and his return to his fatherland; there to spend with honor, the remainder of his days in learned leisure. This book shows that he is not an idle spectator of the course of events. With a noble Christian patriotism, he here vindicates for his country men, freedom of conscience and worship, which he thinks are endangered by the prevailing tendencies of governments, both in Church and in State. The result of his reflections on the state of parties, especially in Germany, is a series of letters under the above title. While this book has a peculiar reference to church matters in Prussia and in Germany generally, with their relations to personal christian liberty, still it contains words of warning to all people, and takes notice of tendencies which are found more or less prevalent in all countries.

The special "Signs of the Times" which he notes are, first:—"The *Spirit of Association*:"—a spirit which he shows, although not peculiar to the present age or to any country or race, has yet in these times, and in Christendom, a special activity and powerful influence alike in matters commercial, political, and religious. In connection with this topic, it is pleasing to find Dr. Bunsen marking with special approbation the Free Church of Scotland:—

"The youngest of these voluntary associations," says he, "which we have seen shooting up before our eyes, during the last few years, by the side of a highly respectable though somewhat torpid national Church, I mean that of the Free Church of Scotland has in only ten years, outstripped the activity of all the State Churches in the world."

The second sign which he notes, is "*the rising power of the clergy as a governing caste or hierarchy, and especially, though by no means exclusively, of the Romish.*" This tendency he finds in the grasping ambition of the modern Papacy, in the prevalence of Tractarianism in England, and in the reactionary spirit of the Old Lutheran party in Germany. To these he might have added also the assumption, by almost all Ritualistic and State Churches, of peculiar rights and prerogatives.

These two tendencies are shown to resolve themselves into a struggle for freedom of conscience on the one hand, and a spirit of persecution and forcible repression of Christian liberty on the other.

"Of these two Signs of the the Times," he says:

"One is in its ascent, the other verging toward its setting. The Spirit of Association with its liberty is the genius and the demon of the dawning day; the hierarchy with its tyranny is the waning planet of departing night. . . . The more powerful flows the Spirit of Association, the more self-evident becomes the antagonism between the hierarchy and freedom. For freedom of conscience is the sole vital air of humanity and the cradle of true personality; and this freedom, the mother of every other freedom, cannot endure the hierarchy for ever."

It is refreshing to find words so true and bold as these spoken in the ears of the intolerant hierarchies and governments of Europe, by one whose character for wisdom and moderation is so highly esteemed. In reviewing the times, he takes an historical survey of the rise of the hierarchy in Europe, and notes,