

Current Topics and Events.

IN THE BALKAN PENINSULA.

At a time when all eyes are directed toward the Balkan peninsula, it may be well to look behind the scenes, and see something of the conditions that have given birth to all this turmoil.

A recent issue of *The Congregationalist and Christian World* contains an excellent article by the Rev. Henry House on conditions in the near East.

The principality of Bulgaria and the kingdom of Servia have made marked growth and progress along material lines since they gained independence under the Treaty of Berlin. But Macedonia has been left sadly in the rear. The Christian subjects of the Moslems feel themselves in the most galling bondage. It is true the Turkish Government is quite tolerant of religious beliefs in Christians who submit and pay tribute. Nevertheless, when one looks into the iniquities of the courts, of the taxation system, and other like conditions, one does not wonder at the "bondage outcry."

The Court and Prison Evil.

In the courts the testimony of a Christian does not count as against that of a Mohammedan. The accused is treated as guilty until he can prove his innocence. The arrested may be kept in prison an indefinite length of time without a trial. Thus a man may imprison his enemy for a considerable period by simply bringing a serious charge against him. Neither will the accused receive any redress for this injustice when he proves his innocence. One path to freedom is by bribing his keepers. Even before trial, many culprits are freed in this way. Thus the Turkish officers of the law are intent on multiplying cases of arrest by which to increase their incomes. To be sure, imperial clemency may be trusted to greatly shorten the term of imprisonment of the condemned. Neither is imprisonment considered the disgrace there that it is in our own land.

The Taxation Evil.

Another great evil is the taxation system. The taxes are auctioned off to the highest bidder. Often he pays more than their value, and then pro-

ceeds to get back his own with a goodly usury. The tax is nominally a tithe, but it may be anywhere up to a half. An apple-tree that bore a crop last year may be taxed for the same amount this year, though it does not produce an apple.

Other Evils and the Outcome.

Of these taxes, however, only a small percentage reaches the Government, which is heavily burdened. But worse than the evils of taxation is the preying upon communities by underpaid officials, and, worse still, the danger to the honour of their women from the Turkish policemen and soldiers.

Nor does even Christianity mean to these poor Christians what the name implies to us. The Eastern Orthodox Church has but a barren formalism to offer her children. The liturgy is in the Slavic tongue, not understood by the people. The prayers to the Virgin are longer than those to the Creator. Evangelical sermons are not permitted by the bishops. Nevertheless these children of the East cling tenaciously to their Church.

From such a nursery numbers of Macedonians have fled to Bulgaria. Many were educated there, and it is they who have instigated revolution. They collected funds. They roused the people. The cry for the freedom of Macedonia became popular to Bulgarian ears. And now all eyes are turned toward the ever-eventful scene of the struggle.

THE KING AND IRELAND.

There may be a cynical few inclined to assert that the warmth of King Edward's reception in Ireland was largely superficial, a simple manifestation of the Irish character, and otherwise belittle the affair. But the fact remains that King Edward has manifested a warm interest in the welfare of Ireland, and that her people are not behindhand in their appreciation.

Since the Act of Union between England and Scotland, early in the eighteenth century, British sovereigns have seldom interfered to affect legislation, even when it applied exclusively to Great Britain. King Edward, in his "command" to the Prime Minister announcing to Parlia-