

the declaration of the *Kirchentag* has the more weight that it is altogether voluntary. The spirit that has been displayed is even more encouraging than the progress actually reached. Altogether there are grounds for the hope entertained by the friends of the Reformation in Prussia that, in the adoption of the Augsburg confession as a common standard, a new day has dawned on Protestantism in Germany.

### ASSOCIATION FOR CULTIVATING PALESTINE.

Our readers are aware that an association was formed, some time ago, for the cultivation of the land of Palestine. This is both an interesting and a hopeful project. It is interesting when we think what soil it is that is now to be cultivated, and hopeful when we take into account that there is a blessing in that soil that waits to be developed, and that the promise assures us that the land shall yet overflow with plenty, and pour out corn and wine as in the days of old. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtaken the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God" (Amos, ix. 13, 14, 15).

The history of the land, like that of the people, has been singularly chequered, and very eventful. Now a garden and now a wilderness; now a land in which there was bread to the full, and now a land which devoured its inhabitants. In every age its destinies have been closely connected with those of its people, as if under the same providential dealings—Whenever it ceased to be inhabited by the chosen seed, it ceased to be the fertile and beautiful land it usually was, and put on the stern features of the wilderness. Its wonted rains were withheld; its terraces were broken down; its olives died through neglect; its mountains became naked rocks; its plains, arid wastes; and sickness and famine fell upon the alien race by whom it was occupied. It knew not the stranger, and refused to yield its strength to him.

But no sooner did its own children return than the land too returned. Its slumbering fertility burst forth, golden harvests began to wave upon its plains, and the olive and the vine to cover its mountains. This established connexion between the land and the people makes the present symptoms of returning cultivation to Palestine of very hopeful omen. If now the land begins to yield its strength, which it never did before in the absence of its own people, it is a sure sign that the day is very near when the chosen seed shall return. Like a virgin on her nuptial day, the land makes haste to array itself. It seeks to woo back its ancient inhabitants by shewing them how fair it may yet become. For we cannot accept in any but a literal sense, those multitudes of passages in Old Testament prophecy which speak of the return of God's ancient people to their former inheritance.

The land is theirs: theirs by divine gift, never repealed; theirs by God's covenant with their progenitors, to be enjoyed by them on condition of their being his people: and so long as they fulfil that condition, we believe that they shall never lose their land. It is theirs by the general belief of the nations of the earth; it is theirs by their own longings and hopes. No other people have a right to possess it, and no other people ever yet possessed it with marks of the Divine approbation. Nor can we conceive any other close to the Divine dispensations towards their race half so natural and appropriate, as their restoration to their ancient and much loved land. There is nothing that would so much impress themselves, or that would so much impress the nations among whom they have been long scattered. Nor is there any thing that would be so manifest a testimony that God had lifted off his anger and returned to them in mercy and in loving-kindness. We hail, therefore, the interest now felt in the land as well as in the people, as a token that God's retributive dealings with them are drawing to a close. Hundreds of their race, in lands afar off, are turning to him whom their fathers crucified, and in concert with this, as it were, the land is returning to its pristine beauty. If we read aright Old Testament prophecy, it is promised that God shall remove, at one and the same time, the curse of desolation from the country, and the curse of blindness from the people. It is a double mercy and blessing.