

criminal cunning. But when the Chief of Police comes forward and ventures not only to lay the blame of failure upon a reign of lawlessness and terrorism, under the shelter of which crime may become rampant, but even to fix the guilt of such a state of affairs upon one of England's most prominent statesmen, he has laid bare a weakness of character which cannot fail to draw upon him assaults far more effective than any which have hitherto been made. It would, perhaps, be premature to criticize Sir Charles' effusion too severely in advance of the receipt of the full text, but the sample given by cable certainly appears to be ill-advised in the extreme. It would not be surprising if the baffled and excited Chief should find himself unable to withstand the storm of indignation he has so rashly excited.

THERE are some indications that English patience with the Portuguese is becoming exhausted by the persistence with which the latter throw obstacles in the way of the English on Lake Nyassa, in their struggle with the slave hunters. A recent letter in *The Times*, dated "East Africa, August 20th," describing how a gallant attempt made by a party of natives, led by Englishmen, to carry an Arab stockade, had failed owing to the want of proper armament, seems to have aroused considerable feeling. The Portuguese on the coast, it appears, delay in every possible way the passage of the arms and ammunition needed by the English, and absolutely forbid the entrance of a field gun, without which it is impossible to cope effectively with the slave-catchers. The *Spectator* thinks that "submission to the tyranny of weakness may be carried too far," and that "it may be necessary one day, if this kind of secret favour to slaving goes on, to occupy Goa as a material guarantee that it shall cease." It would be a pity, in view of the suspicion that would naturally attach to any such action, that the necessity should arise, and it is to be hoped that the Portuguese may yet be found amenable to a better kind of argument. At the same time the whole civilized world will sympathize with English indignation at finding every effort to check the barbarities of the slave traffic in the interior of Africa hampered or defeated by the connivance of the representatives of what claims to be a Christian nation.

PREMIER FLOQUET's scheme for the revision of the French constitution is obviously a makeshift, and seems likely to share the fate of such political compromises by failing to satisfy either party. The proposal to make the Ministry irremovable for a limited term of years, except by a formal declaration of want of confidence by the Chamber, seems to amount to a confession that the English system of responsible Government, in its full development, is unworkable in the French Republic. On the other hand the proposed curtailment of the prerogatives of the Senate, by lodging the power to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies in the President alone, by depriving it of the right to reject financial bills, and by limiting its power over other measures to a suspensory veto for two years, largely increases the power of the Chambers, thus tending towards a complete democracy. In this way it would, apparently, more than counteract any increase of stability that might be hoped to result from the change first named. The Boulangists must be lacking in astuteness if they fail to make capital out of an Act which, while in itself an admission of the need of revision, proceeds so illogically, and with such apparent absence of governing principle.

THE LAMBETH CONFERENCE: DOCTRINE AND WORSHIP.

It may possibly be a relief to our readers to know that we are coming to the end of our comments upon the results of the great episcopal gathering at Lambeth. And yet we venture to think it would be very difficult to find a series of subjects for consideration of an importance equal to those which engaged the attention of the assembled Anglican bishops.

With regard to the subject now before us, it may possibly seem somewhat out of place in a journal devoted mainly to literature and politics. But such a judgment would be rather superficial. It is not merely that these subjects are regularly discussed in the daily papers which are of a more fleeting and ephemeral character than a weekly journal; but further, it is utterly impossible, in an arbitrary manner, to separate religion from literature and politics. Of course the treatment of such subjects in our columns is subject to different conditions from those which are recognized in the *Theological Review* or in the organs of particular communions; but we are well assured that, so long as questions of religion and Church are discussed in our columns with becoming liberality and ordinary good taste, these discussions will be welcome to our readers.

Now, it so happens that the subject of the Creed of the Christian

Church is, at the present moment, of special interest. The Presbyterian Churches have recently been seriously exercised on the question of the revision of their Confession, and it seems quite likely that, before long, some definite step may be taken to establish a more simple Creed for that Communion than the minute and somewhat metaphysical Westminster Confession. In thus writing we do not for a moment deny or forget the great ability, the massive theology, even sometimes the beauty of language of that remarkable document. In England the recent action of Mr. Spurgeon has led to a reconsideration of the terms of communion in the Baptist body, that distinguished gentleman having declared his inability to continue a member of the Baptist Union in consequence of the presence of unorthodox persons among its members.

The revision of the authoritative documents of a Church is a very serious matter, but the refusal to revise is no less serious. And a change is resisted by two totally different classes and on different grounds. The Conservative members (of any and every communion), are afraid of what they consider the latitudinarian tendencies of the day; and the liberal theologians are greatly afraid lest a revision of the formularies should lead to a tightening of bonds which now hang somewhat loose around them. We think that the latter have quite as good cause for apprehension as the former.

It must be acknowledged that as Creeds, Confessions, and Articles become antiquated, they lose their binding force. The meaning of words and phrases gets modified; questions, burning when the Confessions were composed, in time are reduced to ashes. Who, in these days, could believe in the hot battles, for example, of the Gomarists and Remonstrants in Holland? How many living men care two straws about the decision of the supralapsarian and sublapsarian controversy? Mr. Spurgeon is one of the most convinced and pronounced Calvinists surviving in the most Calvinistic of communions, and yet he does not propose to make the "five points" articles "of a standing or a falling Church." Are there any Particular Baptists left?

The consequences of those changes in regard to the confessions of a Church are very evident. By degrees a certain number of articles get to be shelved, or men are found to contend that they do not bear the same meaning to us as they bore to those who compiled them. They were directed, not against present modes of thought, but against those which have passed away. There is a great deal of truth in these contentions; but they are a little dangerous. When Dr. Newman wrote Tract Number Ninety to prove that Anglicans might hold doctrines hardly distinguishable from those of Rome, against which the articles had been directed, it is hardly wonderful that a howl should have arisen. Even now we should protest and that was more than forty years ago. So when a learned Scotch Professor, Dr. Macpherson, took upon him to show that the ordinary Calvinistic interpretation of the Confession of Faith is erroneous, we might ask if we had been dreaming. But such is the fate, the necessary fate (if such a phrase is not tautological) of all documents as they grow old. The bands which were once tight and firm have fallen "loose and ineffectual." Moreover, they are not applicable to the questions of the day.

Many of our readers will remember the famous case of "Essays and Reviews," and the trial of two of the writers for heresy, and the outcry, on the part of a large number of clergy and a considerable number of laity, when the accused were finally acquitted. It was loudly declared that there had been a miscarriage of justice; yet most persons will now confess that the statements of the Anglican formularies were of such a nature that they could not be shown explicitly to condemn the position of Mr. Wilson and Mr. Williams. Another remark may be made which would hardly have been anticipated at the time of the judgment, namely, that the Anglican Communion and almost all the other Reformed Christian Communities have accepted the contents of that judgment, allowing considerable freedom of opinion in regard to the inspiration of the Scriptures and the doctrine of future punishment.

It is quite clear, then, that the Churches are getting into some difficulty with these venerable Confessions. On the one hand, the maintainers of Confessional orthodoxy declare that the progress of the non-natural interpretation of these formularies has advanced so far that they are ceasing to bind anyone. On the other hand, the advocates of greater latitude in dogma complain that these antiquated statements are a burden to those who are hardly expected to believe them in their primary sense, and yet are required to declare their adhesion to them.

And here a serious difficulty of another kind arises. If we are to take in hand the revision of our Confessions, on what principle is the work to be accomplished? Shall we be satisfied with a few broad facts and principles, or shall we imitate the leaders of the Reformation, and substitute elaborate statements equally minute with those which we dislodge? Shall