

## THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

### THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW.

The year that is just passing into history leaves to the incoming year at least two difficult problems to deal with—one in the Old World and one in the New. There it is the Turkish question; here it is Cuba. Both probably will have to be dealt with, and what the results will be upon the general history of the world, only the future can make clear.

The difficulty in Turkey is such that a general breaking up of the empire, whether by means of internal weakness or by foreign invasion, is believed to bring on a general European war. Russia wants Constantinople and France wants Syria and Palestine, but such is the popular feeling in Russia that if the czar should allow a Roman Catholic power to take possession of the Holy land, it would in all probability cost him his throne. Nor can France be indifferent to the establishment of a powerful Russian station at Constantinople, from which the czar might dominate the Mediterranean. The sultan understands the situation perfectly well and so far he has met all warnings with evasive replies or promises made to be broken. He has watched the gathering of fleets in the Dardanelles with perfect equanimity and continued his reign of terror.

It is perfectly clear, however, that the denouement of the great Ottoman drama is coming. The year's disturbances have seriously interfered with the foreign trade and caused heavy losses, and unless a remedy is found soon, the pressure of financial circles is likely to be brought to bear upon those in authority, and this may be more effective than the sympathy naturally aroused in the civilized world in behalf of thousands of suffering Armenians.

The Cuban situation is also an inheritance of the new year from its predecessor. It would seem that a solution is demanded before long, unless the island is to be given over to total desolation. Will the trouble there involve the United States in a foreign war, or are there means within the reach of diplomacy whereby the difficulties may be overcome and peace once more established? Who can open the sealed book of the future and read its pages?

There are those who turn with expectant looks to 1897 as one of the important years in human history. They seem to think that the number seven gives a certain ground for this, because seven and seventy in Bible phraseology often stands for a complete period. They have been called sacred numbers. It may be only coincidences, but to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the years ending with seven have so far been important ones. In 1827 the Prophet Joseph received the plates on which the Book of Mormon was engraved. The coming year is just seventy years since that great event. In 1837 Apostles H. C. Kimball and Orson Hyde were set apart to go on a mission to England, and this was the first foreign mission

of the Church. The first general conference was held in England the same year, the members in December numbering about a thousand. In 1847 the Pioneers entered Salt Lake valley. In 1857 a U. S. army was dispatched against Utah and the Territory consequently declared under martial law. In 1867 Utah suffered much from Indian raids. This year the Deseret Telegraph company was organized, and the first issue of the DESERET EVENING NEWS appeared. In 1877 President Brigham Young died. In 1887 the Edmunds-Tucker bill was passed by Congress. It is true that every year brings its own events, but it is also true that those here mentioned have all been of more than common importance to the Church of God.

### SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.

It will be gratifying to the Latter-day Saints to contemplate that during the year just closed the preaching of the Gospel at home and abroad has been attended with most satisfactory results. In every mission of the Church material advance is reported, both in the hearing of the message and in its reception by the people. In all quarters the disposition to treat the Elders kindly and to listen respectfully to their message has been manifest even to a greater extent than the previous year; and the result has been apparent in a very large increase in the membership of the Church in all foreign missions. At home, also, the improvement has been marked, and the close of the year comes with a showing of increased interest in and attendance at meetings for religious worship, of much more attention being shown by the young people than formerly, of a largely augmented active membership in the Church, and of great improvement in its record of observance to requirements generally. All this has come notwithstanding an agitation instituted, fostered and encouraged by enemies of the Church, and listened to by some whose lack of information or understanding was a means of leading them into mistakes. In the whole field of Church operations, and in every department thereof, there has been a progress in many respects marvelous, and to the Saints highly encouraging. The gratifying record of 1896 ought to serve as an incentive for renewed zeal and increased energy in the great and important duty of spreading a knowledge of the Gospel at home and abroad, and bringing all the honest in heart in practical accord therewith, that they may live godly in Christ Jesus and receive the reward of the faithful.

### LICENSE COLLECTIONS.

The News is informed that some people have an idea that the responsibility for deficiencies in license collections in the city rests entirely upon the present incumbent of the office

which has the business in charge. For the enlightenment of those who take that view we will say that such is not the case. It is with the collection system, which has been growing for years; and the condemnation is for the system, not for any particular officer. The present incumbent has been in official duty only a year, yet the arrearages complained of, by which the city is deprived of a large amount of revenue, have been accumulating for several years. The legal requirement is to collect licenses in advance. Owing to the circumstances of the licensee, it has been customary to allow the collector to exercise discretion in extending time for payment a little beyond the arbitrary date, as such lenience was much more desirable and beneficial than a rule which would force people out of business. So far the custom was good, as shown by many years' experience. But in connection therewith there has grown up a system, also covering some years, of extending time beyond a reasonable period to some who importuned for the same, and the result has been to the city's injury, as stated yesterday. It is this system that needs to be changed, and changed quickly. It probably could be done as readily without as with a separate officer; but it needs the backing of the City Council for any officer to inaugurate the desired reform. A licensee ought to pay his fees at least within the period covered by his license.

### THE CLOSING YEAR.

Today, December 31, 1896, closes a year that in many respects has a remarkable record. So far as progress in the arts and sciences is concerned, the forward steps have not been lessened in number or importance, and many notable advances have been made. In the associations of nations in governmental capacity, momentous questions have arisen and have been disposed of, generally with satisfaction. In industrial matters, there has been a marked change in sentiment from a feeling of great unrest to one of brighter hopes, yet the assurances of an immediate "better day" are not altogether conclusive. And in the field of morals, the matter of betterment has been of such doubtful character that over all the world is thrown a shadow of uneasiness as to what the future has in store for earth's inhabitants.

In some lands the friends of peace and liberty have enjoyed the realization of freedom's blessings in a great degree; but in others the hand of the oppressor has been laid as a grievous load. The Armenian massacres make a dark page of history that will remain through the centuries to come, and the attempt to suppress the Cuban revolution by measures of the most inhuman character forms a parallel thereto; while a long list of other oppressions that might be cited tell how much of human misery yet must be borne ere the light of liberty can shine on every home and in every land and clime. In this respect the history of 1896 is another call for the Deliverer whose power shall free the earth from wrong and usher in the world's millennium.