

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

THE OLD YEAR.

The year that is about to pass into the annals of history is in some respects a notable one. For Utah, 1897 will be known as the year of jubilee, and that event attracted the attention of the world to her people and the happy conditions under which they are living. It is believed that 1897 has inaugurated an era of prosperity to the United States and the discovery of the Alaskan gold fields gives promise of large additions to the nation's resources.

Looking over the world at large the picture presented at the close of the year is in some respects a sad one. All Europe is an armed camp. Christian nations distrust each other, because their policy individually and collectively is one of taking from the weaker what these cannot defend; it is a policy of oppression instead of protection. The flames of war in many places cast their glare over the pages of the history of the dying year, and if appearances do not deceive it seems that further plots are being laid, the denouement of which may come as an international embroglio that will make the earth tremble. Hardly less discouraging is the fact that misgovernment, both national and municipal, seems to flourish and that efforts for reform grow more sporadic. There is unrest among the masses. In the various countries it takes different forms, but nearly everywhere it is heard as the commotion in the air before an approaching storm.

But there is a brighter side. Labor has had its well-earned victories during the year. And so has science in its various branches. The need of a national institute of learning has been felt in this country and the work, though preparatory, may be classed among the important achievements of the year. When completed it will be a shining light among the constellations of knowledge in the world.

The progress of the Church during the past year has been remarkable. In fact, it has attracted the attention of those who had formed an idea that Mormonism was expiring some years ago, and frequently remarks have been made in pulpit and press that the religion of the Saints is as active as ever. And it is. At home the people are manifesting a desire to get a deeper understanding of the doctrine of truth and to practice it, as they understand it. The servants of the Lord have the confidence and the affection of the people and a spirit of unity prevails. There is a willingness to make sacrifices for the proclamation of the Gospel on the part of young and old, and the power of the Almighty is revealed in their midst.

From reports received from time to time from the various missionary fields it is gathered that the Gospel work is progressing abroad. Elders F. M. Lyman and M. F. Cowley have been holding a number of conferences and meetings in the various states of the Union and nearly everywhere found crowds eager to listen to their testimony, while the Lord has set His seal upon the work by signs and wonders following the believers.

In Europe the missionary work is equally satisfactory. Opportunities for preaching the Gospel multiply in Switzerland and the German empire. Liberty to preach is being granted more freely than ever to the Elders in Germany, and as a consequence more souls are added to the Church. Elders Rulon S. Wells and J. W. McMurrin of the presidency of the European mission

have held well attended meetings in Frankfort, Hamburg, Berlin, Dresden, Stuttgart and other cities and everywhere found many people willing to listen to their message of salvation.

In Scandinavia the reports from nearly every conference have been satisfactory. Souls are constantly being added to the branches. The Netherlands mission is flourishing, and in Great Britain the feeling of indifference seems to be disappearing.

Similar encouraging reports have come from the islands of the sea, while an immense field of labor is about to be opened up in Asia, from which the Gospel message may go out to the millions on that continent and reach the scattered seed of the house of Israel there.

It is a matter of sincere gratitude that there have been more additions to the Church during the past year than in any previous twelve months of its history, and that the doors are about to be opened to vast multitudes that have as yet not heard the Gospel.

One of the most important events connected with the religious world abroad is perhaps the Lambeth conference, attended by 200 prelates from every part of the British empire. This council virtually rejected the overtures of the Catholic church for reconciliation and declared that the only ecclesiastical unity possible was one of purpose and essential beliefs, not one of ceremonial. It may be regarded as an official approval of the fractured condition of the Christian world and a denial of the need of the offices of Apostles, Teachers, etc., for the unification of the Church.

These are some of the signs of the time. To those who have gone out to meet the Bridegroom and are eagerly waiting for the midnight signal, they indicate the approach of that momentous time; they are a reminder that watchfulness is needed at this late hour on the part of all who are waiting for the appearance of the hope of Israel.

OUR TIME AND ITS TENDENCY.

What are the real tendencies of modern conditions of life? This is an appropriate question at the end of this, in many respects the most remarkable century of the world's history. There is a restless rush in every direction. As by magic one wonder after another is being conjured up on the stage occupied by scientific research, and as a consequence our civilization has become as complex as the most intricate and delicate machinery ever invented. Are we building on more solid foundations than did the ancients, or is it probable that the structures of our age will decay and go the way of their predecessors?

To many it appears as an axiom that modern civilization is permanent. They cannot conceive of the possibility of a turning point in the forward and upward course. We have advantages enjoyed at no previous time by the human race; our ever growing knowledge of the world, they argue, enables us to utilize its material and intellectual resources and prevent a recurrence of catastrophes that overtook ancient nations wholly unprepared for them. There is no danger of being overrun by wild animals or savage hordes, and all the energy available can be applied towards the achievement of new results for civilization, for progress. This is the view quite generally held.

There is, however, another side to the question and this was recently presented by the London Spectator. This

journal doubts that intellectual activity is as great or powerful among us as it was in great sections of the ancient world. It asserts that the average private citizen of Athens, for instance, was incomparably abler than the average member of the English parliament. Startling as this proposition may be to some, it is held to be true; and the Spectator, while arguing that there is no doubt the stress of modern life develops intellect, insists that this is in the mass, not in a profound form; in the modern world there is a growing dearth of the rarer and deeper kind of intellect, and the pressure brought to bear on the few that do exist is not favorable to their development; we do not produce a Kant or a Spinoza; only critics who write about these men and can give us all the latest views; we have not the minds whose operations move in vast orbits, but we have the eager minds which, comet-like, dart into sight, astonish by their luster and quickly disappear. The article in the Spectator concludes as follows:

"The real truth seems to us that the world is so made that we have to pay a heavy price for everything. The Greeks paid a tremendous price for their ultra-individualism and devotion to art and speculative intellect. We are paying, and shall pay more and more, a very high price for our recognition of the supremacy of science, which, after all, does not cover the whole of human life. We have to do not only with that which is, but with that which ought to be, with art and religion, with the twin ideals of right and beauty; and life will never be rounded and whole, civilization will never be secure, until these are co-ordinated with that keen desire to know which is at the root of our scientific conception of society."

In the discussion of the question of the merits of modern scientific progress as compared with ancient speculations, it is curious to notice that notwithstanding the admitted superiority of our age in this respect, so-called ancient follies seem actually to revive and gather new strength as knowledge increases. Alchemy, chiromancy, astrology, theosophy and various occult sciences find probably more devotees now than ever. People turn with apparent sincerity away from the practical doctrines of the scientists to find wisdom in the old mysteries of Buddhism, Confucianism and other ancient cults. Crowds fill the halls where the alleged marvelous feats of occultism are exhibited. Societies are being formed in the civilized world claiming to hold the keys of the mysteries of ancient mythological deities, and temples of learning are being erected devoted chiefly to the study of the unknowable. The result is apparent. As scientific knowledge is increasing, superstition is growing, too, and rather at an alarming rate. The wheat and tares both find nourishment in modern conditions.

In view of this fact it is necessary to remember that knowledge alone is not a guaranty of the permanency of our civilization. It is the intelligence that goes hand in hand with goodness that is elevating, ever lifting the human race upwards. Where one of the two is crippled, a fall is inevitable, as is the case with the bird attempting flight when one of the wings is wounded; and the fall will be all the more disastrous the loftier the altitude from which it is made. The important question therefore is, what is the status of the moral nature that is developing? The keenest observers are not free from misgivings on this point. Archbishop Ireland is reported to have said recently that he believed that moral and social purity, personal integrity, the repression of passion and the possession