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Current Topics

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

THE
JUBILEE
YEAR.

In his *History of the Church of England*, the Anglican bishop, Dr. Short, laments the practically complete lack, in the Established Church, of 'ecclesiastical law for the restraint of vice.' No such complaint can be laid at

the door of the Catholic Church, even though the ancient rigour of her penitentiary code has been time and again relaxed to suit the lessening virility of eider-down eras that have well-nigh forgotten the moral and disciplinary value of pain and discomfort. An equal—perhaps even more notable—slackening of the reins of ecclesiastical discipline forms one of the most conspicuous features in the history of practically every form of Christianity that took its rise in the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century. This is especially notable in the Calvinistic Churches of Geneva and Scotland, which at one time regulated—with appropriate penalties—almost every public and private relation of their adherents, from articles of faith down to articles of dress, and from blind-man's-buff to the use of curling-tongs. The decay of the sturdy vigour of the early days of the Catholic Church set in with the middle ages. It was probably due as much to a weakening sense of the enormity of sin as to the slow encroachment of the gospel of comfort and the natural dislike of the average specimen of humanity to either take the cross upon his shoulders or to drag it at his heels. Before the twelfth century the long and thorny penitential practices of the early days of the Church had—to meet the relaxed conditions of the time—to be commuted into pilgrimages and other good works of a still less strenuous nature, such as prayers, fastings, alms-deeds, etc. Another substitute for the sharp rigours of the old-time discipline was the plenary indulgences such as were granted to crusaders, to those who took up arms for the defence of the Church against its enemies, to those who went on pilgrimages to the Holy Places, and to those who fulfilled the conditions requisite for the gaining of the jubilee.

The Catholic jubilee is in a sense analogous to the jubilee of the Jews in so far as it is 'a year of remission'—but it is a remission to those who are truly penitent, and fulfil the proper conditions, of the guilt and of the temporal and eternal consequences of sin. The first jubilee year was A.D. 1300. It was proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII. This great churchman and pacificator ordained at the same time that every hundredth year thereafter should be likewise a year of jubilee. In 1343 Clement VI. reduced the interval to 50 years; Urban VI. to 33; and Paul II. (in 1470) to 25. From the days of Pope Sixtus IV. (1471-1484) the 25th year jubilee has been interrupted only once. That was in the troubled days of Pius IX., in 1850. We are now fairly launched in the jubilee that marks the close of the present century. It was proclaimed on last Christmas Eve at the close of the solemn ceremonies which accompany the opening of the *Porta Santa* or Holy Door of jubilee which stands walled-up on the right hand side of the great vestibule of St. Peter's in Rome. This door is never opened except for a universal jubilee. On Christmas Eve the vestibule—which measures 468 feet in length, 66 in height, and 50 in width—was turned into a temporary chapel, and the jambs and lintels of the *Porta Santa* were cleared of masonry, in the presence of a great throng who had the privilege of securing tickets for the reserved space extending from the great bronze door to Cornacchini's statue of Charlemagne. The remainder of the ceremony is thus described by Cardinal Wiseman: 'After preliminary prayers from Scripture singularly apt, the Pope goes down from his throne, and, armed with a silver hammer [this year it is a massive golden hammer, presented by the Catholic hierarchy of the world] strikes the wall on the doorway, which, having been cut round from its jambs and lintel, falls at once inwards and is cleared away in a moment by the San Pietrini. The Pope, then, bare-headed and torch in hand, first enters the door, and is followed by his

cardinals and his other attendants to the high altar, where the first vespers of Christmas Day are chanted as usual. The other doors of the church are then flung open and the great queen of churches is filled.'

THE BIG
BATTALIONS.

SIR ARTHUR HELPS foundered his literary reputation by loading his books far beyond the Plimsoll-mark with weighty reflections on all sorts of subjects, from grave to gay, from lively to severe. A good example in point is furnished by the heavy moralising in which he indulged when one fine day in 1859 he computed, after a vast deal of figuring, that the armies of Europe numbered no fewer than 2,000,000 fighting men. It is unnecessary to repeat his observations, or any of them, here. We will merely remark that his estimate was below the mark, and that the craze for vast armaments soon got so strong a grip upon the Continental military mind that within 30 years Europe had become a vast armed camp, with 50 per cent. more men on a mere peace footing than it could raise on a war footing in the troubled days of 1859. According to Mulhall, the standing armies of 12 principal European countries as far back as 1851 were, in time of peace, 2,195,000. By 1859 the number had considerably increased, owing to the war in the Crimea, the troubles in India and China, and the threatening aspect of affairs in the Italian peninsula. In 1889—just 30 years after the publication of Sir Arthur's scandalised reflections—the peace strength of the same countries had risen to 2,975,000 men. On a war footing they could muster a grand aggregate of 8,266,000 wisps of cannon-fodder. In the same year the 18 countries of Europe had a total of 3,352,000 men under arms as a State insurance against war, and in the event of hostilities could call out no fewer than 9,366,000 soldiers with sufficient knowledge of the business to drill at least after a fashion and pull a trigger somehow.

It seems to be generally understood that this mania for bloated armaments is one of the follies peculiar to our century. Forty-eight years before Christ, some 23,000 men changed the world's history at Pharsalia; 31,000 altered the map of Europe at Crécy in 1346; it took about 100,000 men to decide the fate of Waterloo in 1815; and in 1870 close on half-a-million men fought on each side at Gravelotte, and the line of battle straggled over hill and dale and forest for more than 30 miles. So far good. But were not great armaments known to antiquity as well—in the days of lance and spear and bow and moving phalanx and flying rabble? The hero of the Chinese novel, the *Flowerly Scroll*—which Sir John Bowring gave to us in an English dress—leads thousands and slaughters by the half-million; but if the chroniclers of old are more reliable in their figures then Abderahman commanded 300,000 men at the battle of Tours in A.D. 720; Darius 750,000 in his war with Alexander, B.C. 332; and Xerxes no fewer than 1,800,000 when he set forth to wipe Greece out of the little map of the world as it was known 480 years before the Saviour's infant eyes first saw the world's light at Bethlehem. Where is the modern craze for bloated battalions to end? Perhaps as it did with Xerxes and Darius. Who knows? But there are military experts who think we shall soon see an end of it all. Lord Wolseley said in 1891: 'Give me 20,000 fanatics, and I am by no means sure that I could not take them through the Continent, regardless of any numbers that might be put upon the field against them.' He explained, with a laugh: 'Of course this is nonsense if you take it too literally. But you have no conception of the terror which 20,000 resolute men, who always go forward and never turn back, would have in the hearts of armies many times their number.' Which reminds us of what Marat said to Barbaroux just a hundred years before, in 1791: 'Give me two hundred Neapolitans armed with daggers, and only a muff on their left arms for a buckler, and with them I will overrun France and accomplish the Revolution.' 'There is,' says Lord Wolseley, 'a great deal of hollowness about modern armies. The real soul of the army consists of comparatively few.' Some 20,000 of these 'comparatively few,' properly trained and led, might conceiv-

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