

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE RELIGIOUS PARLIAMENT IDEA.

The Religious Parliament, held in 1893 at Chicago, has become a fact in history. But it is necessary to spread the idea as a principle of action and as a religious maxim which should receive universal approbation. It is the basis upon which not only peace among the different religions can be maintained, but it also facilitates the investigation into truth in the right spirit, which should be done with conservative tendencies on the basis of fraternity and without flippancy. We would only add that in the Religious Parliament the voice of science should be heard and the religious significance of both scientific investigation and scientific truth be recognised.

The Religious Parliament idea has developed on the soil of America. Here is the country of freedom; people soon began to realise the necessity that the different elements of the population should have their religious needs attended to in the manner which would be most congenial to them and best adapted to their spiritual constitution. Mr. Bonney, in the present number, tells the story of brotherly help which in one typical case congregations of a different faith afforded one another; and instances of a similar kind can be multiplied. It is by no means unfrequent for Jews to assist in building up Christian churches, and *vice versa*, Christian denominations have sometimes extended a helping hand to the Jews, as for instance in one special case, when their synagogue had been destroyed by a conflagration. Mr. Bonney deemed it wise to omit names, because there are always captious fault-finders who might expose the parties concerned to hostile criticism, on account of the very breadth shown by them.

The Religious Parliament idea is a practical application of the Golden Rule in matters of religion; and the first realisation of a Religious Parliament on a large scale is an event which will constitute a new epoch in the religious history of mankind. It certainly has contributed a good deal to bring peace on earth to the men of good will.

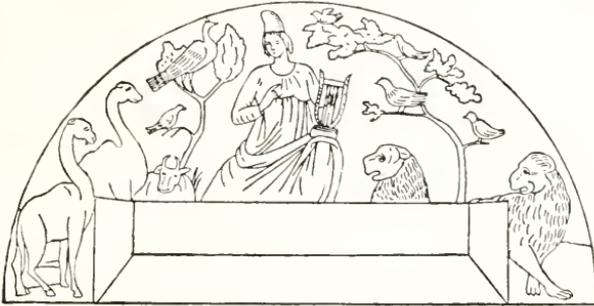
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THE ORPHEUS MOSAIC.

We publish in the present number an article by Dr. Conrad Schick and the picture of a mosaic recently discovered at Jerusalem, in a house belonging to a Mohammedan, west of the Damascus Gate. About five hundred feet northeast of this point, there was discovered six years ago in the house of a Jew another mosaic with an Armenian inscription, indicating that the place was a mortuary chapel, which Dr. Murray was inclined to assign to the time of Justinian; but it may be of later date, and the two mosaics seem to be of the same period.

The Armenian mosaic measures about 21 feet in length and 13 in breadth; it shows a guilloche pattern similar to that of the mosaic reproduced in the present number, and inside a vase from which a vine springs with branches conventionally arranged in the form of circles, within which are various kinds of birds. It has been described and explained by Dr. Frederick J. Bliss in his book *Excavations at Jerusalem*.

The Orpheus mosaic, recently discovered and reproduced on page 564 of the present number of *The Open Court*, is of greater interest than the Armenian mosaic on account of its artistic designs. It exhibits no sign of Christian symbolism,



CHRIST AS ORPHEUS.¹

From paintings in the cemetery of St. Calixtus in the Catacombs of Rome.

but shows Orpheus in an attitude similar to that in which he is represented in the Catacombs, some of which we reproduce for comparison.

Dr. Schick seems to explain the absence of Christian symbols by the assumption that the mosaic forms "the flooring of a music-room," and that "the two women represented at either side of the column are celebrated singers." The former proposition is not probable, and the latter is of a questionable character.

It is safe to assume, however, that the mosaic is purely pagan, and it would corroborate the theory which otherwise can be demonstrated that the Christians in the early centuries availed themselves freely of pagan symbols, until they had developed a symbolism of their own.

¹ *Symbols and Emblems of Early and Mediæval Christian Art*. By Louisa Twining. Pl. 16. London, 1885.

The cult of Orpheus was wide-spread among the people of Greece and Rome at the beginning of the Christian era, and we have reason to believe that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul taught in the Orphic Mysteries resembled to a great extent the Christian view of resurrection. At any rate the Christians adopted the picture of Orpheus as symbolising Christ at a time when they did not dare to make pictures of Jesus.

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A SERIES OF ARTICLES ON CHINA.

AN ANNOUNCEMENT.

The Chinese are in possession of a very ancient civilisation; they know it and are proud of it. But Chinese pride is outdone by European insolence, and thus resulted a lamentable state of affairs which led to the climax of the present disturbances. The distrust, hatred, and contempt which are mutual are not a recent affair but the product of centuries.

The situation is very sad for China, and the prospects of the country are gloomy. It is impossible to tell what will be the end and how the difficulties will be adjusted, but one thing is sure, that the Chinese will in future centuries become an independent factor in the history of the world. I say "the Chinese," not the Chinese empire, for the latter will probably break down and fall a prey to the struggling parties. The Chinese people are patient and industrious; they are modest, easily satisfied and meek. They are at a disadvantage in warfare and politics; but the main struggle for survival will be decided, not by guns and diplomatic treaties, but by sociological conditions; and when the Chinese people shall be drawn into the great whirlpool of the world's commercial interests, we shall discover that they will soon make their influence felt, and the probability is that their very virtues, their frugality and tenacious industrial habits will make them obnoxious to the white man, who kindly offers himself to bear the burden of governing the yellow race.

It will be easier to conquer China than to subdue it, and should a foreign power succeed in taking it (which is by no means an easy task), the conquerors will find out that the easiest way of holding the country would be by becoming Chinese themselves.

The Chinese government, we must remember, is in the hands of foreign conquerors of a different nationality, not much liked by the Chinese and positively hated by many of those patriots who still cherish the memory of the purely Chinese traditions.

The present situation is very complicated. Chinese mobs have killed the German ambassador and have threatened to destroy the lives of all foreigners residing in the embassies of Peking. The Empress Dowager, *de facto* ruler of China, has openly shown her sympathy with the rioters, and the Western powers were thus forced to send troops for the relief of the imprisoned families of the ambassadors. The imperial court withdrew from the capital, and Count Waldersee, generalissimo of the allied Western troops, established his headquarters in the forbidden city. Then a great part of the palace was accidentally destroyed by fire. In the meantime the Russians took possession of Manchuria, and the powers made out their bills of indemnity claims. Such is the present situation, and no one knows what will come of it.

Some blame the missionaries as being the cause of the trouble, others the greediness of the powers, still others would condemn the Chinese for their haughti-