

## THE UNKNOWN CONTINENT.

We are living, says the Pall Mall 'Gazette,' in an age of surprise and discoveries, and some of these of a nature to change all the material relations which have hitherto governed the distribution of the race over the earth's surface. Seas once separated are joined by man's labor; deserts and steppes and lofty mountain ranges cease to oppose impassable barriers between nations. Iron roads traverse the Rocky Mountains as they have already pierced the Alps, linking together the Atlantic and Pacific by a direct line from shore to shore, while for purposes of communication Liverpool and New York speak with each other across the ocean with the quickness of thought. Voyages of five months around the Cape to India and China are now reduced to less than as many weeks. So rapid is progress in every field of human activity, that fact outruns anticipation, and the most active imagination lags behind in the march of events.

In no province can this be more truly said than of geographical discovery, especially in Central Africa. It was but yesterday that Lieutenant Cameron returned from a "walk across Africa" from sea to sea, and yet there has been time to hear of the circumnavigation of the Albert Nyanza, and the missing link required to unite the White Nile with its source in that inland sea of equatorial Africa has been found at last. How many ages of the world have succeeded each other since the first attempts to discover the sources of the Nile! When the Pharaohs ruled in Egypt and Ethiopia and built a city at Meroe after crossing the Nubian desert, efforts were made in this direction; but there is no reason to believe that either the armies or the explorers of Pharaoh ever penetrated far into the country; and when Herodotus inquired of the priests for the sources of the Nile, they had only a ridiculous story to give about its rising from four fountains between Egypt and Abyssinia. Diodorus Siculus, at a much later date, did not get any better information from the priests or philosophers of Memphis. When the Greeks entered the country and an exploring expedition was sent out to sail round Africa, they never penetrated to the sources of the Nile.

Neither the Persians nor the Phœnicians knew anything of inner Africa. The Romans did not succeed much better. Although Nero sent an exploring expedition up the Nile, it seems only to have reached the marshy country near Khartoum. They made the desert their southern frontier. In a word, the ancients knew little of inner Africa beyond such information as Ptolemy had collected—picked up, it might have been, from slaves in Cairo or on the Barbary coast—that the Nile proceeded from great lakes, and across the Sahara was another river running eastward. Nor was this state of ignorance much improved in latter ages, when the Berbers were converted to Islam, and camel caravans traversed the Sahara. Arab merchants settled, indeed, on the banks of the Niger, and then, as now, roamed from kingdom to kingdom; but they contributed nothing to the knowledge of those inner regions of Central Africa. They converted the Soudan into "a second-hand Asiatic possession," as Barth described it, and there they stopped.

And now from that same Khartoum where the Romans were checked, Colonel Gordon's progress in command of the present ruler of Egypt's expeditionary forces have been steady and continuous until crowned with the triumph already mentioned. After establishing a chain of military posts from Lardo on the Upper Nile to Victoria Nyanza on the one hand, and Magungo on the Albert Nyanza on the other, he dispatched Signor Gessi in two life-boats. What this meant can only be realised when it is known that the life-boats were each capable of containing sixty or seventy men; there was also one small steamer of thirty-eight tons; and they all had to be moved in pieces by Colonel Gordon from Gondokoro to Dufe, above the Makedo Rapids, where they were put together by workmen obtained from Khartoum. With the two boats the Albert Nyanza was circumnavigated, and its exact dimensions determined. It was found to be one hundred and forty miles in length, with a width of fifty miles—considerably less than had been imagined; just as Lake Nyanza was recently found by absolute measurement to be nearly one hundred miles longer than was supposed. The President of the Geographical Society rightly said at the last meeting that so important and rapid had been the discoveries of the last three or four years that a new map of Africa must be made, the present large diagram being no longer available as a record of our knowledge.

## SUSPICIOUS ALMONERS.

THE 'Cork Examiner' sounds a note of warning which is worth attention:—Charity is beautiful, but even it may be made hideous. There are certain societies in London which contrive to give it as ugly an aspect as it can possibly wear. They regard a national calamity pretty much as a vulture must do a plague. When famine overtook Ireland, and the people's distress awakened the compassion of the whole world, these missionary societies availed themselves of the event to get hold of the monies that charitable people were ready to give, and devote them to purchasing the power of perverting the consciences of the Catholic poor. A movement of a suspiciously similar character is now going on, the chance of the Bulgarian atrocities being seized upon. We are solicited by circular to urge all who are disposed to contribute to the relief of the miserable people there to send their donations to the Secretary of the Turkish Missions' Society. We take the liberty instead of sounding a warning on the subject. Mr. Foster, who is a very cautious man, and every word of whose speeches on this particular subject seems to be weighed with scruples and drachms, says:—"I would not discourage you from sending money to the society in London if you think right to do so, but I confess I have myself a little doubt as to making a missionary society the almoner for the distribution of charitable funds." Mr. Foster probably does not know as much

of these societies as we do in Ireland; otherwise his discouragement would be more direct and outspoken; but any one who has been familiar with the proceedings of these missionaries will pray that the wretched Bulgarians may not, in addition to their other misfortunes, have added the invasion of a swarm of these adventurers. We have no admiration whatever for Slavie Christianity. We believe it to be of a very degraded sort. Whatever of sympathy we have given the Bulgarians has not been at all on account of their being Christians, but on the ground of mere humanity. But, whatever their faith be, we would rather they were allowed to preserve it undisturbed than have it made the object of attack by such a swarm of mercenaries as we remember in Ireland. Such as it is, they hold it honestly, and we should not like to see them induced to barter it, in order to get food for themselves and children, for that "pure Gospel religion," which missionaries of the class we remember sell along with the soup tickets they have to distribute.

## THE MEXICAN ENIGMA.

THE condition of Mexico, our nearest southern neighbor, continues, we regret to say, a puzzle to the American public. About once in six days we receive news from it *via* Havana, as no information, reliable or otherwise, is allowed to pass over the frontier by the faction that has taken hold of the government of that unhappy country. From the meagre information thus obtained, however, we can draw a conclusion of the actual condition of affairs in our sister Republic. Da Tejada, the worthy successor of Suarez, the Grand Master of the Secret Societies, has been re-elected President, or, in other words, military dictator, of Mexico, subject to the confirmation of the national Congress. But as the national Congress is composed of his partisans, and doubtless contains many of the members of his Lodge, there can be no doubt that the farce of an election will be ratified with all the forms and solemnity which those usurpers know so well how to assume. But what of the people? Have they been consulted, or been allowed to vote for a candidate for the highest office in the State? Not at all. The man who was most potent in overthrowing the Government of Maximilian, one of the most tolerant and enlightened princes, who could have made Mexico a power respected in both hemispheres, was the pet and the pride of the so-called Order of Free and Accepted Masons. His successor stands in the same relation to that order; and whether he be used by it, or it uses him, is of little consequence, as long as the liberties of the people, and interests of religion, and the rights of the Church suffer from their combined attacks. No intelligent person will deny that the people of Mexico are Catholics. As a whole they are a quiet, inoffensive, and law-abiding people, of implicit faith, and simple lives, who, under a wise government, republican or monarchical, would be the happiest of mankind. For this statement we have the authority of the late Bishop Timon, of Buffalo, who lived among them and knew them well. But in an evil hour they allowed the agents of sworn secret societies to come amongst them, to establish lodges, propagate anti-Catholic and atheistical opinions, and consequently to destroy, as far as they could, all reverence for religion and authority. The evil seed thus sown has brought forth its fruit. In the first place, we have a small military clique, all members of secret societies, all anti-Catholic in their public acts, and pagans in private life, ruling a population of over seven millions who are utterly and thoroughly opposed to dissent and infidelity. The consequence is—and those who favor sworn secret organisations should ponder on it—antagonism between the authorities who are supposed to administer the law, and the people at large who ought to obey and respect them. This accounts for the numerous rebellions or *pronunciamientos* that occur in Mexico, and for the present disturbed condition of that rich and beautiful country. Though the Lerdists have possession of the capital and one or two of the seaboard States, by virtue of their superior organisation, the great mass of the people, capable of bearing arms, are in the field, and no less than three distinct insurrections are raging in the land, each provoked by the tyranny and intolerance of the present usurping Government. It does not require the gift of prophecy to foretell how this condition of affairs must necessarily end. In a few years the United States will have consolidated her strength, and then her thirst for acquisition of more territory—her "manifest destiny"—will be again whetted, and as we formerly annexed Texas, and acquired California, New Mexico, and the vast territory west of the Rocky Mountains, so shall we be anxious to dismember the present Republic of Mexico, and annex it in whole or in part. The only salvation for that distracted country that we can see is in the overthrow of the present rulers, the restoration of the rights of Catholics and of their Church, which would ensure national unity, wherein lies the only bond and guarantee of the preservation of the Mexican nation.—'N. Y. Tablet.'

The Belgian press pays a marked tribute to the musical gifts of three young 'Cork ladies, the daughters of Mr. P. O'Brien, public accountant. From one of the papers, the 'Belgian News' we extract the following:—"Two new songs have recently been published by M. Katto, Galerie du Roi; 'Si j'étais petit oiseau,' by Miss Augusta O'Brien, and 'L'invocation a Dieu,' by her sister, Miss Lavinia O'Brien. These songs reflect much credit on the young ladies, the words being pretty, and the music simple and pleasing. Some time ago we had also occasion to notice the composition of another of this talented family, 'L'Hirondelle du Troubadour,' by Miss Jessie O'Brien, which has since obtained great success. The talent and facility of composition developed in the younger branches of this family is worthy of the standard musical reputation of the land of their birth, the country of Balfe and Arthur Sullivan." A compliment of a similar character is made to the gifted young ladies by 'L'Etoile Belge.'