

gloom which encircles the former, and however justly a thoughtful man may sometimes conclude that the times are out of joint, it is wiser and more conducive to happiness to adopt a charitable construction, and indulge in the visions of hope; and it may be fairly argued that, all things considered, the melancholic is less likely to be a useful member of society than his sanguine neighbour;—for the sad musings of the one are apt to lull him into slumber, while the enthusiasm of the other impels him to “expect great things, and attempt great things,”—and the success of the attempt is often found to be strikingly proportioned to the extent and boldness of the expectation.

It may be serviceable to both classes to take a survey of events at distant periods, in order that, contrasting the state of society at the commencement of a given era, with its state at the close, a more correct estimate may be formed. A suitable opportunity is now furnished for such an exercise. We have entered on the closing year of the first half of the nineteenth century. A review of the fifty years will be appropriate and instructive.

It must not be supposed, however, that it will be possible on this occasion to present anything like a complete survey—for the field is too extensive, and the multitude of objects too great. In some respects, too, I might be in danger of trenching on the limits prudently set to your discussions:—such an error I should be most scrupulously anxious to avoid. It will be proper, therefore, to observe that I shall only take a very cursory notice of the general history of the period, purposing to direct your attention, especially, to matters connected with science, literature, and social progress.

At the opening of the year 1800, Buonaparte was First Consul of France. Four years after he became Emperor, and for ten years nearly all Europe was swayed by him, its respective kingdoms being subjected to his influence, or made to feel the power of his arms. It might be said of him, as of Nebuchadnezzar, the proud King of Babylon, “Whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down—whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive.” Fearful were the ravages he committed, and terrific the waste of human life occasioned by his insatiable ambition. The fairest portions of the old continent were desolated by his armies. The forced conscription, deluging France with misery—and the battle-fields of Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, and Waterloo—together with the blood-soaked plains of Russia, attested his implacable fierceness, and the reckless determination with which he pursued the object in view, *coute qu’il coute*. His abdication restored peace to Europe, and that peace was undisturbed, with slight variations, till 1848, when the third French revolution, (the second took place in 1830, when Charles X. was expelled, and Louis Philippe