

The Acadia Athenæum.

VOL. XIII.

WOLVILLE, N. S., MAY, 1887.

No. 7.

Acadia Athenæum.

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→* The Sanctum. *←

IN the presence of peculiar events like the Jubilee year, some thoughts spontaneously take form, and so our attention has been turned to the subject of jubilees in the annals of English history. It is a rare occurrence for an English sovereign to complete fifty full years of rule. Glancing back over the roll of English monarchs, we are struck by scarcity of reigns that are drawn out to a half-century. Henry III stepped six paces over the fifty, but in those troublesome days no notice was taken of a matter that in modern times is being made an occasion of jubilant demonstration and tumultuous joy. Edward III died during his fiftieth year of sovereignty, and the nation banished all thought of rejoicing. Not until four centuries had winged their flight into the past did any one monarch rule England for fifty years. Then George III reigned sixty years; and though the fiftieth was celebrated by a jubilee, yet the merry-making was tinged with sadness, for reason had fled

from the poor old king. Thackeray's touching account of the last sad days of "Farmer George," as his people loved to call him, is so exquisitely pathetic that we cannot refrain from quoting a sentence or two:—"All history presents no sadder figure than that of the old man, blind and deprived of reason, wandering through the rooms of his palace, addressing imaginary parliaments, reviewing fancied troops and holding ghostly courts. He was not only sightless—he became utterly deaf. All light, all reason, all sound of human voices, all the pleasures of this world of God were taken from him." With such a king, the people must have rejoiced sadly.

But now another jubilee year has come round, and it is our good fortune to witness the completion of the fiftieth year of kindly rule by our Sovereign Lady Queen Victoria. Her sound, good sense in public affairs, her lively interest in the welfare of her subjects, and her true, womanly heart swelling up with tender love in the home-circle, and vibrating in sympathy with the hearts of her people, have so endeared her to every Briton that throughout the length and breadth of the Empire there is swelling up universal thanksgiving, because after fifty years of sway the Queen is still the Queen in health and heart and mind. We may fairly say that this is the first real jubilee in English history, and in every portion of the Empire grand preparations are being made to celebrate the rare event with dignity and splendor. There is, indeed, much to rejoice over, and much, we regret, to deplore. As far as other nations are concerned, Britain is at peace with the world; but she is at war with herself—a most lamentable condition, for it seems to argue decline. Let us hope, however, that the decline is only "seeming." Ireland has ever been a troublesome member, and it almost seems as if the "Emerald Isle" had been intended for "a thorn in the flesh" to England. "Howe'er it be," let us cherish the hope that the crowning glory of the jubilee year will be manifested in the radical cure of the "festering evils" of torn and distressed Ireland.