

IN MEMORIAM—1879.

"Time slips from under us. The year is gone."
—BARRY CORNWALL.

1879 has been a year of stir, and strife, and change. Storm, shipwreck, commercial convulsions, political catastrophes, ecclesiastical commotions, strikes, demonstrations, plagues, and conflagrations, have been amongst us, and have worked their wonderful purposes in the world, though we may be uncertain of their issues.

The poet who wrote not for his native land alone, but for all time, has, in a memorable sentence, likened the generations of men to the deciduous leaves. The comparison is poetical, but it is also forcible and well authenticated by the daily line of hard fact. Years roll along so swiftly, yet with so secret a lapse, that we find it well nigh difficult to maintain the remembrance of their continued occurrence. Our fathers, where are they? Gone for ever, and the world works on—with the same rather monotonous movement. The achievements, the joys, the toils, the very sorrow of the past crowd upon us in a confused recollection.

No wonder then, that while the beginning of the year is jubilant, the close of it is depressive. The shroud of the past hangs around us. Vain regrets beset us, by which we are fastened in as with a cruel encirclement, and the only tolerable escape from the dim cogitation lies in the formation of wise resolutions for the future, if only the kingly will may be competent to fulfil them.

A retrospect of the year is natural for all of us. We look behind as well as before us, and the whole proceeding is eminently healthful. As in private so in public affairs, it may not be inopportune to glance at the general course of the past year, noting its suggested lessons.

The first matter that starts to the mind as by a natural instinct is the one topic, that of War. To the various details of the sanguinary strife we need not here revert. There is one terrible fact. Near nineteen hundred years ago our Saviour proclaimed lessons of peace and good-will, as at this season, to his disciples. Throughout these centuries the holy precepts have been echoed by countless voices. The sanction of reason has supported the counsels of religion. Yet, what do we find? In an age of civilization, with its news, its telegraphs, its philanthropic societies, its multiform literature, its vast professions, its momentous agencies of good; the cruel work of slaughter, and devastation, and death is ruthlessly maintained. This fact alone seems to contradict all our boasts about progress and advancement. In theory all is right and wise, no one would dispute that; but theory, divorced from practice, is as baseless as the fabric of a vision. The name of God on the lips and the hate of man in the heart can never be congruous.

The supremely sad occurrences of the year are "Sir Bartle Frere's war in Zululand," and "Lord Lytton's war in Afghanistan." Who can stay the desolating hand? The strife is yet distant from termination. Over this every man possessing a heart must mourn. It was to fulfil Lord Carnarvon's dream of a South African Confederation that the annexation of Zululand was decreed. "The victor tramples down the vanquished; sometimes he even tramples down opinion for a time; but he does not write history. In history Cetewayo will stand by the side of Caractacus, Arminius, and Boadicea, as a brave barbarian who, in fighting for his land and his simple rights, fought, though unconsciously, for the hope of a race, selected by nature, perhaps, as the vigorous stock of a great nation." In Afghanistan a pretended insult was the pretext of the war; the cause, soon and frankly avowed, was the desire of a "scientific frontier," and in the background the ambition of annexing Afghanistan. The whole chain of events in the present struggle, including even the massacre of Cavagnari and his companions so forcibly reminds us of the old embroglio in Cabul in 1837 as to verify the axiom that it is history reproducing itself. If evidence were wanting to condemn the policy of the Government, it might be found in the fact that on the question of mere policy, the opposite views were represented by the late Lord Lawrence and Lord Lytton. "Lord Lawrence, an illustrious man of action, was naturally inclined to a policy of moderation. Lord Lytton, a poetaster and a dandy, is as naturally inclined to a policy of thunderbolts."

In both of these struggles it is evidently with men who are making a stand for their homes, which, though it will be overcome, will seriously impair the prestige of the Empire.

The lust of aggression, the desire of conquest, can never be utterly eradicated from the human breast—probably wars may never cease from the face of the earth—for there is a chronic evil in man—but civilization and progress, if these words really mean anything at all, will diminish their occurrence, will help towards their abolition. Such is one reflection suggested by the expiring year.

In Ireland the old quarrel seems to have broken out once more. The war of religion has been secondary though intensely embittering; the main struggle was always for the land, and it has again taken an agrarian form. The districts where agrarian violence has most prevailed have been singularly free from ordinary crime. In the political part of the Home Rule movement there is comparatively little force; it lacks, above all things, definiteness of aim. Yet

Irish nationality is not dead: the sentiment is still strong though it is vague. How deep a root it has we see by the passionate constancy with which it is cherished by Irish exiles in distant lands, who force their detractors to confess that in undying love of country at least they are by no means inferior to their conquerors.

The event in Canada was the inauguration of a system of Protection under the delusive name of a National Policy. Mr. Goldwin Smith says:—"We subscribe, under protest, to the principle upon which the whole of our commercial policy is based. We assume that the commercial interest of Canada is capable of being separated from that of the continent of which she forms a part, and that it is possible and desirable permanently to treat the people on the other side of the line not only politically but commercially as a foreign nation. This is the creed of both the political parties, and those who dissent from it are denounced by both. We dissent from it, notwithstanding their denunciations, believing it to be at variance with the laws of nature. It is our conviction that Canada never can hope to enjoy her full measure of prosperity, devise what fiscal systems you will, till she is freely admitted to the markets of her own continent, till she is opened to the full inflow of its capital, till its commercial life runs unimpeded through her veins."

On the assembling of the Parliament at Ottawa in February we shall learn whether the new tariff has accomplished its direct object by bringing the revenue to the level of expenditure. What will be its effect on industry it may be yet too early to say. Happily there appears to be a revival of prosperity, but the good harvest here and the bad harvests in Europe are manifestly the cause. On every hand there is the desire of giving the new policy a fair trial.

In the nations of the European continent there are abundant causes for anxiety. In France, the return of the amnestied Communists is likely to prove a fruitful source of trouble, and Paris is indulging at the moment in a Ministerial crisis.

Germany is not absolutely content, albeit she too is rejoicing in a brand new Protective Policy, and what may follow Bismarck's iron grip no man can foresee.

In Spain the newly married King has been called from his wedding festivities to face another Ministerial crisis; whilst in Russia the Nihilists seem to be so ubiquitous as to threaten a general upheaval, and the year closes in that country with a second attempt to assassinate the Czar.

In the United States the Presidency of Mr. Hayes is drawing to its close, and as if to keep their hands in practice, preparatory to the quadrennial election of President in November next, the result of the State elections in Maine has just been manipulated in a fashion that in any other country would have created a convulsion. General Grant has but lately returned from his tour round the world, and has been received with such general enthusiasm that it might almost be safe to predict that he will be the popular candidate for the next Presidential term. The country has been blessed with a bountiful harvest, and the evidences of a return of prosperity are abundant.

The scythe of Death has been unsparingly busy during the year amidst the human swarths on whom he exercises his dire change-bringing prowess. It is a sad task to use our memory as a chronicler of the achievements of the dead. The first name that presents itself is that of the young Prince Imperial, whose strange fate is almost beyond our realization. The adventurous spirit which led him to take part in the South African campaign is so characteristic of the family name as scarcely to create surprise. It is no part of our duty to enter here into the strange, eventful history of his death—his brief record will serve in after-time to "point a moral and adorn a tale"—but any mention of his fate would be unjust which did not tell that he died like a brave soldier with all his wounds in front. Towards the close of the year the death of the Countess de Montijo, the mother of the ex-Empress Eugenie is worthy of note.

The obituary of 1879 appears remarkable for its claiming the names of many who served to connect the present generation with past events which had well nigh receded from our memories, amongst these we may place Marshal Espartero, the old Regent of Spain, during the infancy of the late Queen Isabella, Abdel-Kader, the astute Arab Chief, who for so long baffled the strategy of the French Generals in Algeria, and J. A. Roebuck, who was the last survivor of those who drafted the "People's Charter, and who lived to see almost all the "points" carried into practice, some of them by a Tory Government.

Literature has suffered many losses during the year, we cannot do more than place the names on record; the octogenarian William Howitt, Miss Meteyard, whose writings were known to a preceding generation under the name of "Silverpen," Sir A. Panizzi, Alexander MacLagan, Charles Tennyson Turner, brother of the Poet-Laureate, James Grant, Miss Havergal, Thomas Littleton Holt, and even whilst we are writing, William Hepworth Dixon; strangely enough, too, within a few weeks of each other, the veteran publishers Thomas Longman and John Blackwood passed away.

A similar coincidence was the decease during the month of November of Charles L. Gruneisen, journalist, and John T. Delane, who for 36 years had been Editor of the London Times.

The drama and the stage have lost many ornaments, and here the number of "old-time" names is remarkable—John Parry, John Clarke, Mrs. Rousby,