

(ORIGINAL.)

TALES FOR THE TIMES.

THE knell of another year is sounded. Mournful is its requiem, and its record is one of sorrow.

It is past, and its very hour has been fraught with events of thrilling import to the world, and to our country even in a greater proportion than to others. Ushered in as it was by hopes of better things, the disappointment has been most bitter. When we heard the voice of rejoicing at the birth of the infant year, we deemed that the arm of the desolating fiend was broken—his power destroyed,—and that meek-eyed Peace would long hold her gentle sway over this fair portion of earth's domain.

The year was yet young, when the destinies of our country were confided to one whose life has been devoted to the service of his and our sovereign—one whose vigour, tempered, though not impaired by years, promised all that the true patriot could desire. We rejoiced that in his hands the sword of the avenger was unfleshed—that the first days of the reign of her who claims our heart's affections were not steeped in the blood of her people—we rejoiced that the kindred of so many victims of delusion were not left to mourn the loss of those they loved—that many, who, had the measure of justice been rigorously meted, would have left some innocent heart to weep, were spared, in the hope that mercy so unlooked for might win them back to love.

Did we err? It may be so—but we are punished in the events which have since followed. We have again seen the sword unsheathed, and the blade reeking in the gore of our kind—we have seen those who so lately knelt in gratitude for life, waging that life against the hand that saved it. Thrice sorrowful, that ingratitude so base should darken the character of humanity.

The events to which we allude are yet recent—the wounds yet unhealed—inasmuch that every memory retains the direful catalogue—it is therefore unnecessary that we should trouble the reader with a rehearsal of the mournful tales, and we leave to others the task of preserving of them a historical record, conscious as we are, how difficult it would be for us to trace their causes, or even to furnish a detail of facts, without trespassing upon forbidden ground.

We may, however, be permitted to record our tribute of esteem for the generous ties which have linked together so many hearts for the defence of the glorious empire we are proud to love.

What spectacle can be more noble than that of a whole people flocking to the standard of their country—hand linked to hand—breasting the storm of battle, and turning aside the steel of the destroyer, under whatever guise the foe may shield his unhallowed aim. Home, kindred, friends—mothers, sisters, wives—every endearing tie linking man to earth, bids him to the battle-field, nerving his sinews for the unwished for conflict. And well has the call been obeyed. No one has shrunk from the field of strife, or turned aside from the dread front of battle—many have fallen, but as patriot martyrs their names will be forever cherished in the gratitude and the memories of those they died to save. But the proudest hour for our countrymen has not been that in which the red falchion gleamed. It has been in the hour of conquest, when, unquestioned victors, the voice of mercy was heard above revenge.

We shall be forgiven for thus recording the humble meed for our applause for a people who have acted thus nobly. Their reward shall be in the esteem of future ages, who will point to them as an example of gentleness and heroism, to be imitated in all future time.

But enough of these matters, which some may look upon as foreign to our sphere, we now turn for a brief space to the reminiscences naturally springing from the season of which we write.

A NEW YEAR'S DRIVE.

CHAPTER I.

“The rapture that dwells in the first kiss of love.”

It is today a quarter of a century since Richard Somers breathed his love-tale in the ear of Agnes Welton, a fair creature, who, with the bloom of sixteen summers on her cheek, possessed a heart glowing with