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H. GREGORY & Co.

Hamilton, Oct. 22, 1864.

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THE CANADIAN

Illustrated News.

HAMILTON, JANUARY 2, 1864.

H. GREGORY & Co. Proprietor.

THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

Since we last addressed our readers the few days then remaining of the year have passed; and 1863 is now among the things that were. Some brief reflections upon the events of the last twelve months may be looked upon as by no means unfitting on the occasion of the close of the old year and the beginning of the new. Those events chiefly, we mean, which may be considered as having attached to them a national or world-wide importance. Let it be premised, however, that we are not to be at all understood as attempting a *resumé* or recapitulation, even of the most incomplete or informal kind, of the actual history of the year. A glance backwards at some of its more remarkable developments, those particularly, which to human perception appear as if in an especial manner linked to and drawing after them great events yet to come, is all that we purpose at present.

The terrible and calamitous war which has now for more than two years and a half raged between the North and the South of our nearest neighbouring country may justly claim our first attention. The war rages still, with bitterness apparently unabated; and the most unyielding defiance and the most stubborn determination of continuance is yet heard from both sides. But it would be folly to argue, even in the hyperbolic sense in which alone the thing could be intended or understood, that the war is no nearer its end now than it was a twelvemonth ago. Looking as well as we may at the war as a whole, (of which a part is yet unrevealed and to come,) the impression gains upon us that a very large segment of its whole circle has been swept over during the year just past. True, we cannot see all the way to the end; for to do this is not given to mortal man. But may it not be said that we are at length enabled to measure with some degree of accuracy the *curve of the arc* upon which it visibly progresses; and to realize more or less clearly what must be its inevitable result. Nobody now pretends to believe that the South can conquer the North. Let it be recollected that there were in time past certain memorable occasions, on which that contingency seemed by no means unlikely. After the first and never-to-be-forgotten battle of Bull's Run, in the summer of 1861; then again in about a year afterwards, in 1862, when McClellan's army so narrowly escaped total destruction in the swamps of the Chickahominy; on both these occasions did it appear as if the triumphant entry of Jefferson Davis into Washington was a far more probable event than that of Abraham Lincoln into Richmond. And

even more recently, when Lee was on his march northward, for a brief period sweeping all before him, and when the news of the New York riots and of threatened resistance to the Government of the North by the people *en masse* was sounded abroad, did it seem as if the fate of both Washington and New York, and with them that of the whole country was trembling in the balance. Need we say how much the aspect of things has changed since even the last mentioned critical period of the war. As we have already remarked, not even the most enthusiastic of those who sympathize with the South pretend now to think that it can conquer the North. The most they venture upon is to express the hope, rather than the conviction, that the North will get tired of trying to conquer the South. But of this last there appears but little sign. Is it not glaringly visible to every eye that the people of the North are at the present moment far heartier and more determined for the prosecution of the war, and very much more confident in their anticipations of its results, than they were twelve or eighteen months ago? He would be a bold man indeed, who would say the same thing of the people of the South. Without shutting our eyes to every sign which is before us, we cannot evade the conviction that exhaustion of men, of money, and of the *material* of war, is proceeding at an accelerating ratio in the Confederacy. There is exhaustion more or less felt at the North too, but make a comparison for but a moment, and then decide. On data supplied by the Southern press itself, and by the official communications of President Davis and the members of his Cabinet, we are abundantly entitled to pronounce the cause of the Confederacy to be utterly hopeless, and its speedy dissolution inevitable. This, then, the result of events during 1863 which render humanly certain the triumph of the North and the defeat of the South, is one remarkable development in the history of the year.

Great as has been the change which, during 1863, has been witnessed in the course and prospects of the American war, the European history of the year appears as if it were but the introductory chapter to that of events no less momentous than any that have occurred on this side of the Atlantic. The breaking out of the Polish insurrection; the heroic struggles of the Poles, continued under circumstances which seemed to make resistance to the gigantic power of Russia nothing less than madness itself; and the progress and ultimate failure of diplomatic mediation, will be forever memorable on the historic page. It is no exaggeration to say that but few chapters of the world's history have anything so atrocious to shew us that which will record the savage cruelty of the Russian Government to the insurgent Poles. What gives an additional shade of villainous darkness to the conduct of Russia in the affair is the fact, now tolerably well authenticated, that the insurrection was designedly fomented and brought to a head by the Government of St. Petersburg itself in the first place. The "Notes" of the Great Powers in 1863 on the Polish Question will be of marked and enduring interest in the annals of diplomacy. As a present result, the leading diplomatist of Europe, Louis Napoleon himself, appears as if foiled and beaten at his own game. We say designedly, "as a present result;" for we hold to the opinion that the failure of the negotiations on the subject of Poland, and the additional failure, so far as present appearances go, of the attempt to assemble a European Congress at Paris, were all along anticipated by the Autocrat of the Tuilleries. If it cannot be said of the year just past, that it was great in European events, in any very extraordinary sense, it is most undoubtedly the case, that its developments are by common consent accepted as the prelude to events of a magnitude equal, perhaps, to anything yet recorded in the history of nations. We need scarcely fortify this statement by an appeal to those enthusiastic interpreters of our day, who tell us that the great battle of Armageddon is at hand; or to their many followers, quite respectable both in numbers and in influence, we believe, who as Isaac Taylor has somewhere remarked, are in the habit of industriously collating together the prophecies of Scripture and the daily newspapers. We but give utterance to a strong and widely diffused conviction, when we affirm that just now the civilized world stands hushed and breathless with the expectation of great events. As we have already remarked, the great feature in the history of 1863, and the one of most surpassing interest as far as Europe is concerned, is the Polish insurrection, and the very complicated diplomatic situation now arising in great part therefrom.

But although the Polish question is, of all European ques-

tions, that which has occupied by far the greater degree of public attention during the year, there are others as well, urgently demanding solution, and threatening the peace of the Continent. For all we at present know, war may have actually broken out between Germany and Denmark. And here let us remark, that the refusal of Great Britain to take part in the proposed European Congress, does not by any means imply that she definitely leaves the Continent to take care of itself, or that she renounces her rights as a leading Power, to a share in what we may call general European business. If England take at once a determined attitude with reference to this much talked of Schleswig-Holstein affair, the chances are, perhaps, that the danger of war from that source may pass away. Then there is the "Roman Question," and the "Venetian Question," day by day becoming more intolerant of delay, and more and more embarrassing to those who are interested in perpetuating the present position. On the whole, the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and sixty-three closes with great and deeply-felt perturbation among the nations; some hoping and some fearing, and all more or less looking upon the events of the past year, as but the forerunners of others more important yet to come to pass. A feeling somewhat vague and undefined, but, at the same time, springing from no vain or shadowy causes, but having its source in influences of real and actual potency in the world's affairs, appears to be spreading in the public mind. We know—we feel almost, that *something* is coming, and that, too, of no ordinary character. We can but await with reverence, not altogether unmingled with fear of calamity and of judgment to be executed among the nations of the earth, the dispositions as yet unrevealed, of Him who is the Supreme Ruler and Judge of all.

GIBRALTAR.

Russia declines taking a hand in the proposed Congress, because she fears she will be asked to give up Poland; and Austria, because she fears for Venetia. It is just now reiterated and dinned into our ears that Great Britain wants no Continental or even, fresh Colonial acquisitions, that she is at the same time in no danger of being called upon to give up anything she at present possesses; and that therefore she declines the Congress merely because its supposed objects, having regard to other States mainly, are not practicable. Now in this assumption it so happens that there is, either from thoughtlessness or design, something very important left out of the calculation. That very significant word, "Gibraltar," appears to have been forgotten. We have little doubt but that a European Congress, such as Napoleon proposes, would demand the giving up of the great fortress to Spain, if it really demanded any new thing at all. And the probability is that this consideration had much to do with the determination of the course of the Queen's Government in the matter. Without detracting from the cogency of the public reasons adduced by Earl Russell in his dispatch to the Emperor on the subject; the sufficiency of which reasons is admitted by both parties in England, it may be conjectured that the apprehension of having Gibraltar added to the list which now includes Poland, Rome, and Venetia, was not without its influence on the minds of the "old salts" who now steer the British ship of State. To give up Gibraltar would be justly considered as a very decided step in the direction of making the Mediterranean into a French lake; a contingency the occurrence of which British statesmen are bound to prevent if possible. But no reflecting man can have thought much upon the "Latin race" idea of Napoleon, and his recent earnest cultivation of Spanish friendship, without having the suspicion awakened that he designs making Spain a tool, for objects of his own which are not difficult to divine.

LABOR.

The more we accomplish, the more we have to accomplish. All things are full of labor, and therefore the more we acquire the more we care and the more we toil to secure our acquisitions. Good men can never retire from their work of benevolence. Their fortune is never made. I never heard of an apostle, prophet or public benefactor, retiring from their respective fields of labor. Moses and Paul and Peter, died with their harness on. So did Luther and Calvin and Wesley, and a thousand others as deserving though not so well known to fame. We are unused to labor. It was first a duty; it is now a pleasure. Still there is such a thing as overworking man and beast, mind and body. The mainspring of a watch needs repose, and is the better for it. The muscles of an elephant and the wings of a swift bird are at length fatigued. Heaven gives not to the earth because it needs it; and winter is more pregnant with blessings to the soil than summer with its flowers and fruit. —Chambers' Journal.