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## LIFE IN A LOOKING-GLASS.

HOW fickle is the public in its likes and dislikes, its admiration and its indifference! Never was the capriciousness of the long-eared drove we call "everybody" more strikingly demonstrated than in connection with the Boer War. A few weeks ago it was "Buller, Buller, Buller." One could not pick up a newspaper without reading of the character and exploits of this man, who was hailed as a conquering hero, the defender of the Empire, the one officer in the British army preeminently fitted by character and experience to subjugate South Africa. Now it is "Roberts, Roberts, Roberts." The old Irishman is the greatest fighter that ever lived, if we are to believe the newspapers. Just wait till he reaches South Africa, and then look for big things. This, of course, is identically the same stuff as was written and said of Buller a couple of months ago. But Buller was so unfortunate as to meet with a reverse, for which, it would seem, that not he, but a subordinate, was, after all, responsible. Now, suppose "Bobs" also comes to a dead halt against some stone wall of merciless disaster. Is there any doubt that in such case he also would at once lose caste in the eyes of the readers of newspapers and arbiters of the fate of empires? Thus it ever has been, and I suppose ever will be, with popular heroes—up to-day and down to-morrow, dependent upon continuous success for their frail tenure of public confidence, inestimably lowered by a single faux pas in the eyes of the great world that vulgarly—but perchance wisely—measures everyone by the simple foot-rule of failure.

WE have all seen this thing time and again—in politics, in business, in a hundred and one walks of life. How we bow down and worship before the fetish of success! Everybody wants to "whoop it up" for the popular man, of whom much is recorded or predicted. But the moment the record is discounted, or the prediction unfulfilled, not only is our loyalty weakened, but we feel a positive grudge in our hearts, in that the idol we had set up has turned out to be made of clay. "And this is the man on whom England depended!" exclaimed everyone, when Buller was beaten. The press echoed the sentiment. Behind the words were mingled feelings of disappointment, despair and rage. But now the fickle crowd are appeased by the promise of signs and portents from a new source, and another prophet is raised up in Israel.

THERE is a contemptible side to the vulgar hero-worship of the common herd; but there is a practical, and not dishonorable, side also. It is well that the world is a stern judge; that it demands much, and demands it incessantly. No one can safely rest on his laurels, or live on the interest of a reputation put by for safe-keeping, like money in a bank. A few manage to do so, but for the majority it is impossible. And it is well that it is so. Otherwise, there would be an almighty temptation to drop into a rut and stay there. The world, after all, is not peopled by fools; mankind may have a vulgar standard by which to judge the individual and the event, but it is an intensely practical standard. It asks no questions about motives, but it is unremittingly inquisitive about results. It wants to know what has actually been done, and its verdict is according to the evidence. Future generations may revise and amend this verdict, but in the immediate present the judgment of the people who look for practical results is what "goes." We have all felt the good of the world's estimate, urging us on to renewed efforts and greater watchfulness. We know that we are being daily weighed in the balance—not with minute accuracy, it is true, but, on the whole, justly—and the consciousness of this fact is not, perhaps, altogether evil.

THE other day an exaggerated and sensational report of an alleged Chinese outrage against a mission in British Columbia was wired east and printed in the daily papers. The following day the correct version of what had occurred came to hand proving that the first report had been written either by a correspondent anxious to supply a sensation, or by some anti-Chinese advocate, whose vision had been distorted by his prejudice. I am not by any means a friend of Chinese cheap labor, but I must say, from personal knowledge and experience, that the many faults of John Chinaman are more frequently exaggerated than his few virtues are even grudgingly extolled. We don't want the cheap and too often immoral East competing with and contaminating honest Canadian families; and yet we might as well make up our minds that the western world has a grave problem to face and to solve in the Chinese question, and the best way to solve it hardly seems to be the ostrich-like policy of exclusion and isolation which many well-meaning people have proposed. I am glad to see that this question is being taken up in a very serious strain by several writers worthy to be heard. A thoughtful article is published in *The Atlantic Monthly* for January, which I would commend to the attention of my readers.

IT is entitled "The Future of the Chinese People," and concludes with the following words, which I think are worthy of repetition, because it is not to be expected that everyone who peruses this column will see the original article: "Men are disposed to think lightly and superficially of problems that do not immediately concern themselves; but the question, 'What of China?' will not down by its being dismissed from thought. It enters as an important factor into the great world problems that are now pressing for solution. It is a question not only concerning the future of one-fourth of the human race, but also concerning the influence of that portion of the race upon the other three-fourths. The vast potential resources of China, the labor power of the people, and their undeveloped capacity to share in the consumption of the products of the world's industries will compel statesmen and students of political and social problems to acquire that knowledge of China which, as yet, is possessed only by the few; and the opportunity for the religious and social renovation of that people will more and more draw out the interest and claim the help of Christian teachers and philanthropists. Already the forces that are destined to create a new China are beginning to operate upon the lives of the people. The nation is waking from its long dream of the past to live in the present. There are many 'signs of the times' which assure us that the day is not far distant when China will be delivered from its effete civilization, will enjoy a stable and well-ordered government, will enter upon a period of material prosperity, and will come under the power of those motives which have their source in the vital truths of the Christian revelation."

I HEAR that Upper Canada College, Toronto, which is, perhaps, the finest non-sectarian school for boys in the Dominion, is becoming a great financial success under the principalship of Dr. George R. Parkin. I am told that the college was operated last year at a profit of \$10,000; that the present accommodation is taxed so that more pupils cannot be taken; and that a large sum is to be spent in building residences for the boys upon the "house" system, whereby 10 or 12 individuals are grouped together under one roof. The recent history of Upper Canada College goes to show that the establishing in Canada of a great school on the lines of Eton or Rugby might be undertaken with good promise of success. A considerable and growing number of Canadian boys are in attendance at the great English public schools. There are several colleges in both Quebec and Ontario, any one of which might form the nucleus of such an institution for Canada.

FELIX VANE.