

Literary Notices.

TURNING POINTS IN LIFE. By the Rev. Fred. Arnold, B.A., Christ's Church, Oxford. New York: Harper Bros.

Mr. Arnold holds that in what men regard as mere chance-work there is often order and design—that ‘what we call a ‘turning-point’ is simply an occasion which sums up and brings to a result previous training.” These occasions he classifies carefully and illustrates by a wide range of anecdotes. The following chapter will afford a fair specimen of his style:

The worst heresies are not those which are labelled heresy, as the worst poisons are not those which are labelled poison. Gin, rum, brandy, count hundreds of victims to every one who has fallen a sacrifice to prussic-acid or belladonna; and the various isms which in our books of theology are labelled heresy, are utterly unknown to scores and hundreds of men who are ruined by false doctrines of which the church is almost oblivious, or to which it is far too indifferent.

Of these unlabelled heresies, one of the most common is the doctrine of luck. A lucky man is the common explanation of success; an unfortunate man is our commonest interpretation of failure; and the very word “fortune” is itself a sign that our fundamental conception of the secret cause of prosperity is radically wrong. The book to which we are indebted, not only for the title, but also for the thoughts and illustrations of this article, is a singularly readable and a very successful assault on this popular notion.

It is indeed true that there are turning-points both in the history of the race and of the individual, and that life depends oft-times upon a single critical moment. History is full of illustrations of this fact, and in so far the popular idea is not only correct, but the truth which it embodies is an important one. Sometimes, circumstances which seem at the time to be purely fortuitous, have colored and influenced a whole lifetime. Justin records such a circumstance, one which determined his whole future life and character. One day he had been musing on the seashore, when he was accosted by an aged and benevolent stranger, who ventured to ask him the nature of his meditations. Justin explain-

ed to him how he was musing on the philosophers; but his new-found companion asked him whether he knew aught about the prophets. Then ensued the conversation which led to his conversion, and so determined his whole future life.

A similar event is narrated of Sir David Brewster. On the threshold of his great scientific researches, his sight began to fail him. He had every reason to fear that his eyes must go. Some one told him that for such cases, the great surgeon, Sir Benjamin Brodie, recommended a particular prescription. It was a very simple one, common snuff being the chief ingredient. He took it, and was completely cured. Years after Sir David met Sir Benjamin; but Sir Benjamin was surprised at the matter, and said the prescription was none of his.

In a like manner it was to what men call luck, that Charles Estlake, the great painter, owed his success. When Napoleon was caged in the Bellerophon, and the vessel lay in Plymouth Sound, off the English coast, young Estlake, then unknown, took boat day by day, and hovered about the vessel for every glimpse of the captive. Every evening, about six, Napoleon used to appear on the gangway and make his bow to the thousands who came out to see him. Charles Estlake studied his model, made a good portrait, and from it constructed a large painting of the Emperor, for which the gentlemen of Plymouth gave him a thousand pounds and sent him to Rome, and made the fortune of the future President of the Royal Academy.

These incidents abundantly prove the truth of Dean Alford's words, and the wisdom of his counsel, “There are moments that are worth more than years. We cannot help it; there is no proportion between spaces of time in importance nor in value. A stray, unthought-of five minutes may contain the event of a life. And this all-important moment, this moment disproportionate to all other moments, who can tell when it will be upon us?” But the lesson of this truth is, not to wait for “something to turn up,” not to trust to a turn of the tide to carry us into the harbor, but “to have our resources for meeting this all-important moment available and at hand.”

For in what men regard as mere chance-work there are order and design. What