

A THOUGHT FOR DECEMBER.

BY CHARLES WALTER.

As the close of the year approaches, it is customary with many, to review the events which have occurred during the past twelve months. Shakespeare has said, "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together." Most people however, in looking back, have an unfortunate habit of placing the ill before the good, to the great detriment of the latter, which is undoubtedly the greater portion of the human existence.

Human retrospection should resemble the books of the business man who has completed a successful year. The books show what has been done, and though here and there, there may appear a little loss through some transactions, still there is a comfortable balance in hand, with which to enter the coming year. So, though during the past year we have met with a trouble, a loss or disappointment, still we have much to be grateful for, besides the experience we have acquired in the last twelve months.

Perhaps the man most to be pitied at this season, is the unsuccessful man, who reviews, with bitter regret, the failures of the past year. But too frequently the conviction is forced upon him, that he has not yet discovered his true vocation in life. If he is still a young man, he may have the courage to strike out boldly into some new path wherein he feels he can succeed; but when he has reached the milestone of life's journey, which is supposed to mark the first half of his career, ambition dies, and the unsuccessful man becomes, to use a paradox, a harmless nonentity, or descends to the level of the brute creation, to sink eventually into an obscure and unremembered grave. How many such men may be

seen daily in our streets! Yes, and how greatly will their numbers continue to increase, until parents cease to use unwise, and I had almost said unlawful pressure, in their efforts to convert their sons to a profession or business, for which they are totally unfitted, simply because their fathers were successful in that particular line, or for some other equally absurd reason.

These lines, however, are not devoted to a lamentation over lost chances or misdirected energy, but to a thought, which at this season of the year is impressed, more or less, upon the minds of all, high and low, rich and poor, *viz.*, the thought which enters our minds, of those who have passed away from us.

December is a month devoted to family gatherings, and at no time can the truth of Longfellow's lines be more fully realized:—

"There is no flock, however watched and
tended,
But one dead lamb is there!
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair."

The last twelve months have been prolific to an exceptional degree, with death in high and well-known places, and almost every reader of these lines been acquainted with one or more, whose faces will be absent from the approaching Christmas gatherings. As we recall the face of some dear one, who has, perhaps recently left our midst, do we permit ourselves to fully realize the great uncertainty of our own existence? Surely, as we look back on the past year, we can see how highly improbable it is that each seat occupied at this Christmas table will be