

## THE OLD AND NEW YEAR.

BY M. A. M.

THERE are scarcely any phrases in our language which contain more food for thought than do respectively The Old and New Year, and yet, like many others of equal solemnity, they are rendered so familiar to our ears by frequent repetition, that it seems almost superfluous to enlarge thereon. Yet still, to a thinking mind, what a course of thought is laid open by the simple phrases—the Old and New Year—the respective portals of the past and present! Of these, one stands ready to receive us, while the other closes behind, never again to open. At that solemn moment, when the midnight bell chimes slowly and sadly forth the farewell to the Old Year, how eagerly and anxiously do we turn, to cast a melancholy glance through the transparent but impassable barrier on the path we have trodden, where the Old Year is already gradually blending with the dim colouring of its predecessors! Fain would we dwell on the view (which becomes more attractive in proportion as we recede therefrom) but no—no—we are hurried onward—onward—by an invisible arm, even that of the great father of our race—Time! With rising hope do we turn to where the Future lies spread before; it, too, has the same filmy screen, receding ever slowly before our eyes as we advance on our way, and seeming, like its twin sister—The Past,—incomparably fairer when viewed at distance. Scotland's lamented Campbell has sweetly and truly sung:

" 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,  
And robes the mountains in their azure hue."

Would that it were not so sadly true, even as regards time:—How many bright hopes do we often indulge at the opening of the New Year—how exquisitely fair are the visions which float before the mind, and which are to be realized at some indefinite period or periods of the year!—Days, weeks, and months, roll on, and find the poor wayfarer still as far from those fairy landscapes as when first he saw them, till the dawn of another year brings fresh prospects, and new El Dorados to be again pursued.

If the coming of the New Year be hailed with gladness and rejoicing, well may the departure of the Old be regarded as a period of sorrow.

Another measure is then exhausted of the time allotted to each of us—it can never again be recalled (an idea sorrowful enough in itself!) and of that amount of time, how much has been idly lavished on trifles unworthy the attention even of a rational mind!—how many opportunities of benefiting our fellow creatures have been allowed to pass unheeded—and, in short, how very little of it has been devoted to the great work of salvation—"the one thing needful."

How many changes, too, may have occurred in the course of the past year—all these now rise before us in their former and clearer colouring. Of the friends who welcomed with us the dawn of the year, and who sympathized in our hopes and aspirations, few may witness its close! Some are, perhaps, mouldering in the grave, while others, though still in life, are, as it were, dead to us—either from being removed to an almost immeasurable distance, or, worse still—from total estrangement!

On the present occasion there are many reasons why we should look forward with more than usual interest to the opening year. The course of events is gradually deepening, and may burst forth like a torrent. Amongst the nations some mighty movement seems going forward, which, though now like the subterranean fires, invisible and incomprehensible, may anon break forth with volcanic impetuosity. Who may tell where this state of things will end—who can raise the veil which conceals the next few months from our eyes, and show whether the powers who now stand armed and girded for the contest, fiercely and jealously, regarding the movements of each other—whether they will at length come to an amicable arrangement, or, in pursuit of their own objects "let slip the dogs of war," to ravage and desolate the earth. Who may venture to assure us that the close of this year may not behold these now peaceful Provinces the scene of fierce and sanguinary contention, or that the trampling of armed legions may not resound on the opposing shores of the St. Lawrence? Heaven grant that such be not the case, and that this now prosperous land may not be visited by that fearful scourge—WAR!