

**THE YEAR 1908.****Events of General Interest and Public Import, at Home and Abroad, during the Year now Past.**

THE CHRONICLE commenced its review of the year 1907, published on January 3rd, 1908, with the words: "The chief characteristic of the year that has just come to an end was unrest. It was interesting enough and exciting enough, but history will record it as a year of great happenings rather than of great achievements. The seismic disturbances which have so severely shaken up this old planet of ours seem to have found an appropriate reflex in human life and thought." We added later on: "This year of phenomenal earthquakes and volcanic eruption has been a year of upheaval and instability in many countries and in many departments of human life." In these particulars, the year 1908 would have been in marked contrast to its predecessor, but for the awful, and so far as history records, unprecedented calamity which befell Italy so near the close of the year. The present indications point to the conclusion that the loss of human life from the earthquake which occurred on Monday morning in Southern Italy and Sicily will far exceed even the death roll of "the Great Earthquake" of Lisbon in November, 1755, when 50,000 people were swallowed up in Lisbon alone, and which has generally been regarded as the greatest calamity that ever befell the human race. Terrible as such gigantic misfortunes ever must be, science has come to regard them as essential symptoms of planetary life. A world without seismic disturbances would be a dead world. The event is a sad ending to a year which upon the whole the nations could regard with considerable satisfaction.

**International Developments.**

The year 1908 was one not so much of phenomenal progress, as of steady recovery. This was markedly the case in the domain of finance and commerce. It was a year of peace, although rumours of war as usual were plentiful. And there was something to justify a certain amount of public uneasiness on this subject. We had a critical situation suddenly created in the Balkan States by the aggressive action of Austria; we had manifest unrest in India; we had a great deal of mutual distrust and suspicion between England and Germany and the deliberate warnings of such statesmen as Lord Cromer, Lord Roberts and Lord Rosebery; besides the significant hint conveyed by the naval manoeuvres in the North Sea, carried out by 315 war ships flying the British flag. But we have had no war, and the chief apparent effect of the rumours has been to evoke expressions of common sense and abhorrence of war from nations that were disposed to delight in war, and those expressions must make for a lasting peace.

**British Public Affairs.**

The British Government has had more trouble with domestic than with foreign politics. With courage amounting to rashness it has staked its life on numerous measures of a highly controversial character, on some of which it has had the misfortune to be defeated; and on some of which it has had the perhaps greater misfortune to be successful. Among the latter is the Old Age Pension Act, which promises to give the Chancellors of the Exchequer something to think about for many years to come.

The Education and Licensing Bills threaten to affect the immediate interests of the political parties, more than the permanent interests of the nation. British statesmen of all shades of political opinion have manifested a great interest in and cordiality towards Canada; and the feeling in the old country in favour of Imperial Preferential Trade has evidently grown rapidly during the year. The Greater Britain feeling on both sides of the Atlantic was greatly stimulated by the celebration of the Quebec Tercentenary.

**The Year in Canada.**

In Canada business has been, upon the whole, of a satisfactory character, notwithstanding the political interruptions involved in Dominion and Provincial general elections. No important issues being involved, the general feeling in the business community is naturally one of satisfaction that they are over. A bountiful grain crop and the phenomenal development of the Northern Ontario mining region were among the factors which encourage faith in the future of Canada. The biggest item to be entered upon the debit side of the Dominion's ledger, was one that will probably be taken little account of in the public mind and that is the incalculable loss from forest fires, which was probably greater last year than ever before. The average man, however, is more impressed by the indirect loss of \$40,000 involved by the tying up of the shipping on the St. Lawrence, through smoke on the river than he is by the loss of many million dollars worth of timber and the lasting injury to the country. Other fire losses—referred to in our columns a week ago—were also unfortunately heavy during the year just ended.

**Those who have Passed with the Year.**

We will not attempt to give here a list of all the mighty ones of earth, who fell by the wayside in 1908. To us all, as Horace Greeley used to say about the news: "the near facts are the great ones." We heard with horror of the assassination of the King of Portugal and the Crown Prince; we heard with regret of the death of such men as Grover Cleveland and the Duke of Devonshire; and without much emotion of the passing away (to use the cant of the daily press) of the Dowager Empress and the Emperor of China. But there were some deaths during the year the news of which came to most of us with a sense of personal loss. Montreal could ill spare such men as the beloved Bishop Carmichael, as Henri Julien, Sir Robert Reid, Samuel Carsley and Henry R. Gray.

The Old Year is a tale that is told, but even in the telling there is much of comfort and much of hope for a bright New Year.

THE ENGLISH SOVEREIGNS recently struck by the Canadian branch of the Royal Mint from the Reddick mine in the Larder Lake gold field, are being sold by the directors of the company for \$25 each. Less than one hundred are being minted with the 1908 date.

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE much appreciated by the management of the Grand Trunk Pacific was the announcement of the placing of the last span of the big Clover Bar bridge—the sole gap in the way of continuous track laying between Winnipeg and Edmonton and the farther West.