

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

NOTE.—In many country chapels the custom is practised of "Praying the Old Year out and the New Year in."

Softly the moon-beams shed
O'er waste and field and fell a lonely light,
Trembled the vision on the chapel walls
And deep into the night.

Far from the glistening shroud of huddled homes,
Like some wild dream beside a weary sea,
Which hears, betimes, the plaining of the waves
Then sweetly sleeps, nor knows the melody,

The hillsides droned and murmured; then to rest
All natures noisy pilgrims fondly stole,
While still the watcher held the dying sands,
And memories fond and hopes swept o'er each soul.

'Twas New Year's Eve.—E'er since with raptures
sweet
Declining day had drawn the breath of even,
Within the sacred walls a music's swell
Had moved each wandering thought, in peace, to
Heaven.

Still rolled the chorus on, subdued and slow,
Soul-echoes by the soul best understood;
And ever through the surges' low refrain,
Awoke one symphony: "God alone is good!"

Thus passed the chimes; but as beyond the spire
The darkening shades of Passing faintly shone,
The music ceased, to cling the parting hour,
The silence deepened, and the shades crept on.

Softly they stole, and oh! how sweetly too
Thrilled every heart as neared the angel Day:
Which, pausing to outpour the blessed year,
Wafted to heaven the "Brethren, let us pray!"

B.

A FORGOTTEN WORTHY.

THERE is something palpably incongruous in the mere juxtaposition of such words as Science and History. It is, as Froude has said, as if one were to talk of the color of sound or the longitude of the rule-of-three. Science, concatenation, system; and History, the registry of human nature, wayward and inexplicable even to the present, infinitely more so when viewed in the doubtful past.

The coordinate advance, accordingly, of science with philosophy has given birth to no more interesting, though abortive, phenomenon, than the attempt to establish the paradox of a Science of History. Vico first thought of it, and the idea has suggested itself in various phases and in varying degrees of intensity to Montesquieu and Compt and others even greater than these. But it is of the last great theorist of this school, Henry Thomas Buckle, that we wish to write, not, however, as a critic of historical method, which would be too grave an office for even an undergraduate to assume, but from the point of view of perhaps the most interesting individual of the great book-loving public—the desultory reader.

"The History of Civilization in England" appeared at a day when speculative philosophy exercised a fascination which it has since, in a very great degree, lost; and with this tendency the work of Buckle jumped in a way distinctively its own. The man himself lent interest to his book. Sickly from his cradle, he lived to read more books perhaps than any man before or since, and died at the zenith of his powers, a disappointed man. His work is but a fragment of a fragment, being, in fact, only a portion

of a great introduction. We subjoin a few of the many startling and paradoxical statements it contains, not, however, as résumé, or even statement, of its cardinal doctrines.

History, and especially statistics, proves that the laws governing human action are as fixed and irrevocable as those that rule in the physical world. The number of marriages in a community depends not so much upon sentiment as upon the price of wheat. Intellectuality and not morality, determines human progress. Religion, literature and government are products, not causes, of civilization. Similarly the individual is the mere tool of his age. The Roman republic was overthrown not by the ambition of Julius Cæsar, but by that condition of affairs which made his success a possibility. The progress of civilization varies directly as the spirit of scepticism and inversely as credulity—to the support of which single statement the whole of Vol. II. and a large portion of Vol. I. is devoted. These and other equally daring and really more important speculations, backed by a prodigious display of learning (in Vol. I alone over 1,700 works are quoted), raised their author at once from obscurity to renown. He was the lion of a London season. Not till his death in 1862 did the reading world recover its equanimity.

Yet for all Buckle's laboured ingenuity, even the desultory reader, be he never so impressionable, retains a lingering consciousness that had for instance the Cossack skirmishers been a trifle more active in that Russian garden, or had the spirit of truth or goodness entered a little more into the composition of Napoleon—the face of Europe might have been featured otherwise than it is today;—which surely is a consideration worthy of History. It is surprising also to read from one whose views were such, elaborate and truthful panegyrics of Burke, Richelieu, Adam Smith, Voltaire ("the greatest historian Europe yet produced," yet one who is at vital issue with Buckle himself), Descartes and other justly celebrated men. Thus does he turn his own guns upon his own fortress.

A corollary of this abasement of the individual is that many so-called historians are mere annalists—mere babblers of vain things infesting the public highway of the national literature. Another necessary consequence is his hatred of monarchy, with the gules, the azures, the dexter-chiefs of heraldry. The hall of science is the temple of democracy.

Statistics and books of travel do not constitute the whole anatomy of a nation, nor does Buckle himself consistently follow out his statement that they do. To show, however, the wonderful comprehensiveness of the man, it is enough to say of his plan, that after choosing England as exhibiting on the whole the most normal political atmosphere, he notices as a preliminary sketch a few of the problems that are absent from or obscure in English history, investigating, with this intent, the rapid accumulation of knowledge in Germany, its rapid diffusion in America, the protective spirit in France, in Spain ecclesiasticism, in Scotland superstition, intending to apply the results deductively to the English portion of his work. The chapters on France, and especially that dealing with the period of Louis XIV., have been pronounced an excellent portrayal of the conditions which culminated in the revolution. Germany and America he did not live to treat of; but the chapters on Scotland are sketched with a powerful, though often mistaken, hand; and all in a style which, rising at times to flights of burning eloquence, contains not a single involved or obscure passage, nor a sentence that is not apt and musical. If one notices the recurrence of a metaphor by which the progress of civilization is likened to the march of an army, this is but the intentional repetition of the fact that though individual wills must and do move in irregular orbits, they counterbalance one another in the grand sum-total, and neutralize any disturbance of final results,