

SESAME

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TOPICS OF THE TIMES: A REVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR.

ANNUUS A year of wonders, indeed! It is a common comment of MIRABILIS! historians that the closing years of centuries are apparently most memorable. It was towards the close of the fifteenth, that the great Genoese discovered America; towards the close of the sixteenth, that little England struck the fatal blow to the giant power of Spain; towards the close of the seventeenth, that the same little England won a still greater victory, this time over domestic tyranny, in that altogether glorious revolution of 1688; towards the close of the eighteenth, that France strove to work out ideals the most splendid that have ever been embodied in a national programme of reform—too splendid, it seemed, for success. And now, towards the close of the nineteenth century, the world seems preparing for another tremendous struggle, with neither England, nor France, nor Spain, for the central and heroic figure, but a little, puny kingdom, with barely seventy years of national existence to boast of, and behind that, centuries of degrading and demoralizing servitude; though back of that, again, lies a part of unparalleled historic renown.

It certainly seems as if the world were spoiling for a fight. One war scare no sooner passes away than there comes another. A storm may be necessary to clear the air, and the storm, if it comes, is likely to be a hurricane.

Yet, in spite of such ominous indications, it is for another reason that this year is to be marked, at least in the history of Britain, as a memorable year. For with it all preceding reigns are eclipsed. Queen Victoria has now reigned longer than any of her predecessors, and the red-letter year is to be properly celebrated throughout the empire on which the sun does not presume to set. There is a good deal of absurdity in most formal celebrations and rejoicings. The ingenuity of man cannot apparently invent a other method than the somewhat unsatisfactory one of processions, and,