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THE YEAR 1896.

The year of grace 1896 seemed to promise at its opening to be one of strife and bloodshed. The war cloud hung dark and threatening over Great Britain. It had advanced from the south and from the west, and seemed about to burst as the year opened. During December Mr. Olney's dispatch and the President's message, affirming the right of the United States to interfere in the settlement of the Venezuelan controversy, had been followed by the denial on the part of Lord Salisbury of any such right. President Cleveland's position was supported by the Legislature and the press of the country, and threats of war resounded through the length and breadth of the United States.

Dr. Jameson's raid into the Transvaal had taken place during the last week of the old year, and on New Year's day he was defeated at Krugersdorp and compelled to surrender. The telegram sent to President Kruger by the Emperor of Germany and the unfriendly attitude of the German press gave England reason to believe that what was already an embarrassing complication with a small and distant country under her own protection, might end in a war with a strong and powerful neighbor. Meanwhile the other powers stood aloof, and the Armenian difficulty was an evidence that the Eastern problem was still unsolved and might at any time furnish a pretext for the attack of jealous and unfriendly powers. But Great Britain at this crisis was not wanting to herself. She faced cold friends and threatening foes with a calmness which astonished the world. Speedily but without haste she prepared her forces so as to be ready for any emergency. And then her statesmen turned their attention to the solution of the difficulties which surrounded them. One satisfaction she had in her hour of loneliness was that from almost every part of her vast empire came assurances of sympathy and promises of assistance, and it was soon realized that however passive she might have been the Sea Queen had only been sleeping and was ready for any emergency.

At the close of the year it is wonderful to note how completely the dangers have been passed and the difficulties overcome. The wisdom and good feeling of Great Britain and the United States have conquered pride and prejudice, and by mutual concessions the Venezuelan boundary question, which threatened to involve serious complications is about to be finally settled. Statesmen and philanthropists on both sides of the ocean, seeing what terrible troubles may arise from very trifling causes have devised a plan by which all questions that may arise between England and the United States can be submitted to arbitration and it may be expected that before the close of another year we shall have to announce the establishment of a permanent court of arbitration for the two great English speaking nations.

Dr. Jameson and the other officers who led the Johannesberg raid have been punished for their gallant but unlawful expedition. The Uitlanders have not, it is true, obtained redress and some of their leaders have suffered fine and imprisonment, but they are biding their time and there is reason to expect they will before long gain those rights and privileges which it is impossible for the most tyrannical of governments to withhold much longer from free, intelligent and law-abiding citizens. Meanwhile the Transvaal suffers from the narrow and arbitrary policy of the Boer President and his government. In this connection it may be noted that the German Emperor hastened to assure England that his impulsive expression of sympathy with the Boers was not intended as a menace or an insult to her, and his actions since have not contradicted the truth of his protestation.

The Armenian problem is still unsolved. In spite of eloquent appeals from statesmen of both parties and men of all creeds, the government of England has not felt justified in interposing single-handed to save Armenia, and in the absence of force, threat and remonstance have alike been idle.

There has not, perhaps, been as much bloodshed this year as last, but the massacres at Constantinople have taken from the Sultan even the wretched excuse that he was not able to control the fanaticism of his own subjects. When in the streets of his own city defenceless men and innocent women and children were slaughtered before the eyes, if not by the orders, of his own officers, no reasonable being can believe that his will was not obeyed. Rumors reach us from time to time of an agreement between the powers by which this terrible tyranny and oppression shall be made to cease, but still Abdul Hamid reigns according to the manner of those kings of old of whom it used to be said that they did evil all the days of their lives.

Near the close of 1895 an expedition was sent under the command of Sir Francis Scott to march to Coomassie and establish British sovereignty in Ashantee. King Prempeh submitted without a blow, and the only losses which the British army experienced were those from malaria. Among the victims of that terrible disease was Prince Henry of Battenberg, the husband of Princess Beatrice, who had joined the expedition and whose loss the Queen and her daughter mourn as that of a considerate and attentive son-in-law, a kind husband and a loving father.

In March all the world was astonished by the news that an army, composed of English and Egyptain soldiers, had been ordered into the Soudan. It was prophesied that England would find a very formidable foe in the dervishes, and that the Egyptain troops were not to be depended on. But General Kitchener advanced up the Nile, winning several victories on his way in. On the 23rd of September he took and occupied Dongola. The success of this expedition has been uninterrupted, and the Egyptian troops have won praise by their gallant and soldierly conduct.

The present has been a quiet year in Great Britain. There have been no great political changes, and no burning political questions agitating the public mind. Early in the year, Mr. Justin McCarthy, finding the duties and responsibilities of the leadership of the Irish parliamentary party inconsistent with the leisure which his age and his literary pursuits rendered necessary, resigned. Mr. Sexton was elected to take his place. Mr. Sexton, however, not only declined the honor, but resigned his seat in Parliament, whereupon Mr. John Dillon was elected leader of the Home Rule Party. Mr. Gladstone, roused by the Armenian outrages, has shown that even at eighty-six he has intellectual vigor and physical energy enough to address large audiences and to write long magazine articles. His attempt to bring about a recognition of the Anglican orders by the Pope has excited a good deal of comment, friendly and the reverse, but has produced no other result.

In October Lord Rosebery, feeling that he did not agree with other members of the Liberal party, notably Mr. Gladstone, as to the duty of England alone to interfere to force the Sultan to cease his persecution of his Christian subjects, resigned the leadership of the Liberal party. His place was taken by Sir William Vernon Harcourt, who was already leader in the House of Commons and who, therefore, was able to take up the work which his chief laid down, without any disturbance of the party machinery.

This year the Queen celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of her coronation and the 23rd of September was marked as the day when the length of her reign had exceeded that of any preceding English sovereign. The occasion was marked by many congratulations on the progress which had been made, both in the prosperity and the extension of her empire since her accession, and attention was directed to the great moral and social benefits which England has derived from having had so long in the highest place in the realm a woman who has performed the duties of wife, mother and Queen as purely, as faithfully and as conscientiously as Queen Victoria has done. The birth of a second son to the Duke of York has added another member to the royal family, and in the little daughter of the Czar of Russia Her Majesty welcomed another great-grandchild.

England has this year entertained many noble and royal visitors. Among these may be mentioned Li Hung Chang, the great Chinese envoy, who visited Her Majesty, the Prince of Wales, Lord Salisbury and Mr. Gladstone, and did not forget to show that he still loved and honored the memory of his departed friend, General Gordon. The Emperor of Germany for a few days cast care aside and paid a friendly visit to his English relatives. But more importance was attached to the state visit of the young Czar of Russia and his wife, who spent some days at Balmoral Castle. Whether that visit has had any effect on European politics or not does not yet appear, but it is surely a good sign when the autocratic ruler of a country which has for many years looked upon England as a power to be circumvented and opposed in every way possible, visits her shores and partakes of her hospitality.

In labor circles an unusual quiet has reigned. There have been strikes, it is true, but none that has disturbed greatly the progress of peaceful industry. The jubilee of the repeal of the Corn Laws gave Free Traders an opportunity of reviewing the progress of the manufacturing and commercial interests of Great Britain during the past half century, and afforded the protectionists, who are increasing in numbers and influence, a chance of pointing to the great agricultural depression of the country, and of showing that Free Trade was not a panacea for all economic ills under the sun.

At the close of the year news has come that there is great distress in the West of Ireland, and that there has sprung up a strong agitation in that Island against the heavy taxation imposed by the Imperial Government. Speeches have been made by the Duke of Devonshire and others, recognizing the duty of the colonies, as well as the Mother Country, to promote in every way possible the unity of the Empire, and a treaty has been signed by France and England which settles the Siam and Mekong questions.

In France very little has gone on which concerns the outside world. There has been no important revolution. A cabinet has fallen and another taken its place without any great excitement. There have been some whisperings of combinations between Royalists and Bonapartists, and the Duc' d'Orleans has declared that he is not satisfied with the laissez-faire policy of his supporters. France has not been very successful in her colonial policy. Madagascar was hard to conquer and is still harder to rule, and it is said that she is not increasing in population at home at a sufficiently rapid rate to make it incumbent upon her to seek new homes for her people in strange lands. The important thing with regard to France so far as the outside world is concerned is that she is still good friends with Russia. The Czar and Czarina were welcomed there with every demonstration of delight, and the young Emperor seemed to appreciate and to respond to the cordiality with which he was received.

Germany too, has since the episode of the Kruger telegram, been pursuing the even tenor of her way without interfering greatly with outside affairs. The Czar and other great visitors have come and gone and the young Emperor has paid visits, made speeches, reviewed troops and watched the progress of affairs with the keen eye of one who is determined not to lose sight of any opportunity of using his power and influence to advance what he considers to be the right cause or to prevent the execution of plans of which he disapproves. But it is not always that even the Kaiser can have everything his own way. He has resolved that the German navy shall be as efficient as the German army is now, and there is a strong opposition in the Reichstag to passing the estimates which he considers necessary for his purpose. A good deal of excitement was caused a few months ago by the revelations of a secret treaty which was made in 1888 between Russia and Germany, and which was supposed to be incompatible with the then existing Triple Alliance. The newspapers gave as their authority Prince Bismarck. But beyond affording a theme for newspaper discussion very little result has followed the disclosures.

This has been a busy year in Russia. The Czar, who succeeded to the throne in 1895, was crowned with his young wife at Moscow in May with a pomp and splendor that made the descriptions of the ceremony read like an eastern fairy tale. A terrible catastrophe, caused by a panic, in which two thousand spectators, lost their lives, marred the joy of the festivities. The subsequent visit of the royal couple to Austria, Germany, England and France has been already referred to. The trans-Siberian railroad has been pushed steadily forward, and a treaty has been made with China by which Russia will be allowed to extend her great railroad through Chinese territory and so obtain an outlet to the warm waters of the Pacific ocean. The death of Prince Lobanoff, the great foreign minister of Russia, was a great loss to the empire, but some one else will be found to carry on his work. Altogether the powerful influence of the Russian empire is extending very fast, and it is to be hoped for the future of mankind that knowledge and enlightenment will spread as fast among her subjects.

The kingdom of Italy is not in this year in the happy condition of the country that has no history. In December of last year her troops were defeated by King Menelek of Abyssinia. When news of the disaster arrived in Italy the Crispi minister was overthrown and the Marquis di Rudini took his place. But the change of ministry did not bring success to the Italian arms and their soldiers were withdrawn from Abyssinia.

Spain has for the last two years been sending out forces to conquer her rebellious colony of Cuba. General Weyler has this year had at his disposal a great army and an immense amount of money, and still at the end of the year Cuba seems as far from being conquered as she was at the beginning. The other great Spanish colony in the East, the Philippine Islands, has taken up arms and is so far successfully resisting all the attempts made by Spain at subduing the insurrection.

In Crete the Christians have with some success revolted against the rule of the "barbarous Turk," and the Powers have intervened to gain the appointment of a Christian governor of the province.

In Asia there have been no great wars or revolutions. China has made friends with Russia, and Japan, in her independent way, by extending her commerce and improving her manufactures, promises soon to be a formidable rival to Western nations in the industrial world. The famine in India, though not so severe as was at first expected, will tax to its utmost capacity the ability of the Government to afford timely and complete relief.

The prosperity of the South African Company and the progress of Rhodesia received a severe check by the troubles in the Transvaal and the rising of the Matabele; but Cecil Rhodes is still there, and it will be a wonder if his wonderful energy, enterprise and powers of organization do not find a way to recover lost ground, and to set things on a better footing than they were at the beginning of this year. He is one of those men who do not know what failure means.

On this side of the Atlantic the year has brought its changes. In South America, indeeed, with the exception of the Venezuelan difficulty, things have been wonderfully tranquil, and, perhaps, we may hope that the peoples of that continent are growing tired of revolutions and are setting themselves to work to develop the splendid natural resources of their various countries.

At the beginning of the year the people of the United States were contemplating what they thought might be the consequences of President Cleveland's message to Congress, affirming the right of that country to interfere in the Venezuelan despute, and of Lord Salisbury's reply. The hot-headed and thoughtless, or the unprincipled, rejoiced in the idea of going to war, and prophesied the speedy discomfiture of the hated English. But the wise and good of all parties hoped that the nation might be spared the horrors of a fratricidal struggle between two powerful and brave nations. Business men mourned over the losses they were already suffering, and looked forward with dread to the prospect of greater misfortunes. As we have seen the storm soon ceased and wiser and better counsels prevailed. The American Venezuelan commission was appointed and went quietly on with its work, unnoticed, and after a while almost forgotten. In January $75,000 were appropiated for the expenses of a commission determining the boundary line between Alaska and British America. The commission has finished, or almost finished, its work, and the last disputed boundary line will have soon disappeared from the American continent. A source of disagreement between Canada and the United States is, it is expected, being removed by the commission now sitting in our city to settle the claims of the sealing vessels which were unjustly seized by the United States, and whose claims were ordered to be paid by the Paris Arbitration on the seal fisheries.

For many months the United States has been expressing sympathy with the Cuban rebels. Filibustering expeditions have been organized, not "of course" with either the knowledge or consent of the government, against the Spanish forces. This has deeply offended the Spanish government and enraged the Spanish people. But their indignation reached its height when, after the death of General Maceo a few weeks ago, Senator Cameron proposed a resolution asking Congress to recognize the Cuban Republic. It is not likely that this Congress will take the matter up, and as before the good sense of the nation is against war, but it is well for the peace party in the United States that Spain is not as rich and powerful as she is proud and spirited or the insult would have brought war upon them without delay.

The event of the year, however, in the United States, was of course the Presidential election. Every other interest was absorbed in that, and even the industrial world paused to watch the contest. When it was found that the struggle was to be one between the advocates of free silver and the upholders of a gold standard the excitement rose to fever heat. Every argument was used and every effort put forth by both parties to elect their candidate, and great was the rejoicing and deep the feeling of security when it was found that McKinley had been elected president of the United States. Mr. Bryan and his followers declare their intention of carrrying on the struggle, and great pains are being taken to find out just how large was the majority by which McKinley was elected, but the advocates of sound money are satisfied with the fact that they have the reins of power in their own hands and that prosperity and public confidence are likely to be the result.

In Canada there has also been a general election and the Opposition has been returned to power. Early in the year Sir Mackenzie Bowell resigned and Sir Charles Tupper took his place. A short session of parliament was called for the purpose of passing the Remedial bill, intended to give the Catholic minority in Manitoba the rights to which under the Constitution they were entitled, but the measure was not passed, the Liberal Opposition having by protracted discussions rendered it impossible to adopt it until the life of the Parliament had expired.

In the general election that followed the Liberal party making the reform of tariff and an immediate settlement of the school question the issues, were returned to power. Since then a settlement of the school question has been arranged between the governments of Manitoba and that of the Dominion. Whether that settlement is final or not time will show. Archbishop Langevin and a section of the Catholic clergy of Quebec declare on behalf of the minority that they are not satisfied. A tariff commission has been appointed and has been busy taking evidence for some weeks in Toronto and Montreal. The Minister of Marine and Fisheries, the Minister of Railways and Canals and the Minister of Public Works have visited Western Canada and British Columbia and possibly good may result from the knowledge they have gained of our resources and our needs. Apart from politics the year has not been eventful. Canada has been fairly prosperous. Few have grown rich but there has been little distress or poverty. The harvests have been excellent and the various industries have been safely and on the whole profitably carried on. There is one part of Canada of which so moderate an estimate would not be true and that is British Columbia.

The year 1896 will long be remembered as that in which the wonderful mineral wealth of the Province of British Columbia was determined beyond the possibility of doubt, and in which the work of development began. In Kootenay, in Alberni, and a hundred other places, capitalists have invested their money; and men have gone to work to get from the bosom of the earth those treasures which have such an attraction for men of all ages and of every country. We have, like the rest of the world, felt heavily the pressure of hard times, but with the new year we have every reason to hope for a return and an increase of prosperity.

During the year Death, though he has been as active as usual has had comparatively few shining marks. Among those whom he has laid low during the year was Prince Henry of Battenberg, husband of the Princess Beatrice; he at the end of 1895 sailed for Ashantee, to take part in the expedition against King Prempeh and his troublesome subjects. Hardly had he reached there, however, then he was stricken with a fever and died on board ship while on his way home. Rt. Hon. Hugh Culling Eardley Childers, died on January 29. Having served for some years as a member of the Victoria, Australia legislature he returned to England as agent general for that colony and subsequently became a member of the Liberal administration in Great Britain as a Lord of the Admiralty, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancashire, Secretary of War, in 1880, and Chancellor of the Exchequor in 1882. Thomas Hughes, universally known as the author of "Tom Brown's School Days," and "Tom Brown at Oxford," and who was also prominent in connection with co-operative institutions in the Motherland, died on March 23. Baron Hirsch, the Hebrew philanthropist, and Leon Say, the distinguished French statesman, were both removed from active life on the 21st April, and on the 27th of the same month, Sir Henry Parkes, the distinguished statesman of New South Wales, died at an advanced age; on the 8th June, Jules Simon, the French author and politician, being called away. On July 1, Mrs. Harriet Beecher-Stowe, the authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and the celebrated sister of the late Henry Ward Beecher bade her adieu to earth, though she and her noble endeavors in the anti-slavery movement will long be remembered, not alone by the race whose cause she so forcibly advocated, but by thousands of admirers the world over. Among others whose demise is to be recorded are Sir John Pender (July 7), of Atlantic cable fame; Sir John Millais (Aug. 13), president of the Royal Academy; General Trochu (Oct. 7), the first military governor of Paris; George du Maurier (Oct. 7), the author and playwright; the Most Rev. Dr. Benson, Archbishop of Canterbury (Oct. 21), and on October 23 Mr. Crisp, for some time the suave and dignified Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives.

Among deceased Canadians at one time in public life were Sir John Schultz, formerly Lt.-Governor of Manitoba, who died on April 13. He was also prominently connected with the public affairs of that province, prior to its admission to the confederation, and during the stormy days antecedent and immediately subsequent thereto. In June two former Lieut.-Governors of Ontario were added to the majority. Hon. D. A. Macdonald (June 10) represented Glengary for a number of years, and was a member the Mackenzie administration, which he left to occupy the more elevated position at Toronto. Hon. John Beverly Robinson (June 20) also represented Toronto in the Commons and acceptably discharged the duties of the gubernatorial position in the province of which it is the capital. Hon. Mr. Balfour, who had made his mark as Speaker of the Ontario Legislature, died on August 19, shortly after he had been appointed to the Provincial Secretaryship.

All that remains for us is now to wish our readers, one and all, A Happy and prosperous New Year.

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