

wide limits, it will be found correct. When we contemplate either the ills which we are compelled individually to endure, or those by which society at large is afflicted, we feel that we need all the encouragement and consolation that can be derived from any and from every source. And I think that the maxim, "the worse the better," is capable of affording us some relief under a variety of annoying, troublesome and painful circumstances.

Few of us, I suppose, are very partial to a severe winter. Such a season is, to multitudes, a source of great distress; thousands of working men are thrown out of employment; the price of coals rises; poor people are half-starved; the number of applicants for parochial relief is augmented; old persons are cut off; weakly and consumptive persons cannot stand before the cold; sheep are buried in the snow; the tires of railway carriage-wheels snap; and not a few bones are broken by falls upon the icy streets. It would be very easy to show that a good many evils attend a severe winter. But, on the other hand, an old proverb reminds us that "a green Yule makes a fat kirk-yard." This may not be quite correct; possibly a severe winter is more fatal than a mild one; still many of us do feel invigorated by a sharp, cold season; where there really is robust health, such a winter seems to be of great service. And, whatever be the effects of a severe winter upon the human constitution, it is generally believed that, unless it be very severe indeed, it has a good effect upon the land—

"If the grass grows in Janiveer,
It grows the worse for't all the year."

If, however, the physician can prove that a severe winter is detrimental to the public health, and the agriculturalist can show that it is injurious to his operations, I will nevertheless draw this consolation from such a season, viz., that it makes the spring all the more welcome. It strikes me that the inhabitants of tropical countries have not much in their climate whereof to glory over us. If they know nothing of the severity of the winter, it is impossible for them to experience the exquisite enjoyment which thrills our hearts when we can say—"Lo, the winter is past; the flowers appear on the earth, and the time of the singing of birds is come." And so our paradox, "the worse the better," may help to cheer us in the cold wintry weather.

Sometimes this paradox is true of great public calamities. The fire of London, in the year 1666, burned down five-sixths of the city, covered with ruins a space more than a mile long and half a mile broad, and destroyed property worth from ten to twelve millions sterling. To many individuals that catastrophe was commercial destruction; but it is now tolerably clear that no piece of good-fortune that ever gladdened the hearts of the citizens was of so great and valuable service as

that furious fire. The city was soon rebuilt, not exactly in the best style possible, but in a style that was a great improvement upon the previous state of things; the streets were not made wide enough, but they were made wider than they had been before; and instead of the mean and wretched hovels of lath-and-plaster, which had been such ready fuel for the flames, substantial houses of brick were erected, which rendered the occurrence of anything like so great a calamity all but impossible. But this was not the only advantage; the city, as reconstructed, was much more healthy than it had ever been before. In the very year before the fire the Plague destroyed nearly one-third of the inhabitants; from that time until the present day the Plague has been all but unknown in London. Had no such conflagration occurred, it is difficult to imagine how a great and thorough improvement of the metropolis would ever have been effected; and had the fire been confined to a small area no large improvement could have resulted. The fact is, that the great fire of 1666, was just exactly what London wanted to save it from becoming the most inconvenient and most pestilential city in Europe, if not in the world.

And what the great fire did for London, cholera has done for many other towns. This frightful malady has been a very useful teacher. In many of the places that were almost decimated by it we have learned to adopt sanitary measures, and so have considerably raised the value of life, and prolonged its average duration. If the cholera had not been severe, and the deaths from it frightfully sudden, as well as very numerous, we should have gone on temporizing and dawdling, thinking about expenses, and no great reform would ever have been attempted; the streets would have remained imperfectly sewered, or not sewered at all; houses would still have been crowded with people from the cellar to the garret. Happily the cholera struck hard, and struck people of every class, and thus thoroughly frightened us, and compelled us to make our towns more cleanly. The work is not effectually done yet, and therefore it will not be a matter greatly to be deplored if cholera, or some other pestilence, should again give us the admonition that we need, and teach us once more that "cleanliness is next to godliness."

I do not know but that even to a railway accident we might apply this paradox, and say, "the worse it is the better." On the thousands of miles of railway in Great Britain, a fatal accident is unhappily a very common occurrence; and accidents on a small scale: though in the aggregate, fatal to large numbers, do not attract much attention. But if a severe collision or break-down took place involving the deaths of two or three hundred persons, then the public feeling would be so mightily aroused that inquiries would be stimulated to the most extraordinary exertions