

Contributed Articles.

SIGNS OF NATIONAL DEGENERACY.

SYMP TOMS of national decay are for a time unobserved by those who suffer from them. It is with the nation as with the individual—"Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." The great silent intellectual and moral forces which mould the destiny of communities for evil are usually unheeded until they become decidedly pronounced in their action, and then, when too late, multitudes express regret for the past and alarm for the future. It is greatly better to be forewarned, and, in laying the foundations of national life, as we are doing in Canada, to shun the things which make not for distinction and honor, but for shame and disaster.

Among these may be classed want of reverence, which assumes many forms. It may be with regard to things sacred or secular, relations which are wholly public or strictly private. When parents are refused the reverence due to their position, household government, which is at the basis of society, is overthrown. When truth and honor are treated in this fashion the issues are the lies and frauds of business and politics. When law and international relations are objects of scorn, instead of sacred awe and respect, we have social disorder, vice, violence, murder and warfare. When reverence for woman dies in the heart of a man or a people, coarseness and vulgarity in speech and behaviour predominate. And above all, when religion, founded upon and regulated by common sense and revealed truth, is despised and becomes the subject of jest and profligate wit, we may be sure that the person or nation thus characterized is speedily hastening to utter ruin.

Kindred to this evil is contempt for the past. This is the fruit of ignorance as to its treasures of thought and wisdom. Extensive and critical knowledge of history is not a strong point with those who feel independent of what has been. What is, and what is to come, may be very precious, but it is not rendered more so by scornfully ignoring or reproaching the past. Everything does not grow worse by growing old. The names William, Thomas, Mary and Elizabeth are none the worse of having been borne by our grandfathers and grandmothers. Some things grow better by the lapse of years. Thus truth becomes more fully attested, and rendered more potent to our