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The year One thousand Eight hundred and Fifty-six having been laid in the "tooth of all the Capulets," and another milestone on the road which leads to that

Undiscovered country, from whose bourne No traveller returns, having been passed, it is but rational that a few reflections should occur to our minds not inappropriate to be offered to our readers; for we hold that no man of common intelligence and who is duly sensible of the fact, that he and all are but bubbles on the stream ever flowing onward to the tomb, and ever receiving fresh additions to its volume—can regard the stated return of another year without feeling the prompting of his better nature suggesting a review of the past.

The prominent event of the last year, and one which is destined to have the greatest effect upon the destinies of the world, is the Peace concluded by the Allies with Russia. This Peace, purported to be the termination of a giant struggle between the civilized Powers of Western Europe, enlisted to oppose the ruthless invasion of a horde of barbarians into the territories of a neighbour—weak indeed in the appliances of modern warfare, and in the strength derived from the superior civilization of the Allied Powers, but strong in that devoted spirit which brought the Moslem into Europe, and has kept him there from the days of Mahomet II. to the present time; and which, while excluding from his adoption the improved, and constantly improving, social and political systems of his European neighbours, has not only left unimpaired, but actually strengthened his attachment to the principles—social, political and religious—which have descended in one long and unbroken line from his victorious ancestors. This renitence of old customs and institutions on the part of the Turks, although by many considered as a blot upon the European escutcheon of the age, and a standing libel on the alleged progress of mankind, has not been without effect; for nothing but a close adherence to the rules laid down by their Prophet, and a compliance with his precepts, externally at least, could have prevented the "Asiaties encamped in Europe" from being an easy prey to the threats or seductions of the powerful and wily foe who lay upon their northern skirts. One great and permanent good has resulted from the contest which the late Czar—true to the traditional policy of his ancestral House—waged against Turkey. It exhibited to the world a spectacle not witnessed since the time when the lion-hearted King of England led his legions into Palestine, as brothers-in-arms of the warlike subjects of Louis of France. This one fact is in itself so suggestive of future changes, that, whether we consider the good feeling and spirit of fraternization which subsisted between the Allied forces—the entente cordiale which characterized the communications of the Sovereigns of the two great nations—the loyalty with which the Emperor of the French fulfilled his obligations to the Queen of Great Britain—or the delicacy which, under circumstances so calculated to revive them, repressed any manifestation of irritating reminiscences on the part of the troops of either nation,—we cannot doubt that we are now living in a time pregnant with results which will change the aspect of the whole world.

It is not many years since Nelson told a young relative who came on board his ship as a midshipman, to hate a Frenchman as he would the Devil. Now, in the last year we have seen the Sovereign of Britain delegating to her cousin the pleasing office of distributing British medals to French soldiers, and Englishmen in Paris heard and applauded their proud and joyful shout, "Vive la Reine d'Angleterre," as the glittering testimonials of their courage and conduct were affixed to their manly breasts. That the Peace to which we have referred may be of long continuance, we hope; but we could not but think at the time of its being concluded, that it was premature—that Russia had not been sufficiently punished—that the damage of war had not been brought sufficiently home to her—that her anxiety for a suspension of hostilities proceeded more from internal exhaustion than from a sincere wish to cultivate the arts of peace—to improve her internal organization—to advance the material interests of her people by improved means of communication—the emancipation of her countless serfs—the adoption, in short, of the principles which create a public opinion, and of the institutions which tend to foster its expansion, and at the same time limit its expression within legitimate bounds. These apprehensions we still think will be found not to have been visionary. Scarcely had the ink with which the Treaty of Peace was signed dried upon the parchment on which it was inscribed, when the Scythian, with a faithlessness which his savage ancestors would have scorned, declined to comply with the express stipulations of his authorized agent; and now the dark cloud of war against Britain is hovering in the far East, and there is no doubt that Russian intrigue and Russian agents are and have been at work, instigating the Shah of Persia to assume an attitude of hostility to England. The particular incidents which have brought the meteor flag of England into the Persian Gulf, as the standard of an enemy, have not yet been made public; but we doubt not that the complicity will be found to have been a part of the policy of Russia, to distract the attention and divert the power of Britain from the scene of the recent struggle in Europe, while she might with the aid of her ally beyond the Caucasus and the Caspian, strike a blow at the Indian possessions which form so important a part of the empire on which the sun never sets.

This brief reference to Persia, with the history, policy and topography of which we confess we are but slightly acquainted—naturally brings to our notice that immense territory in India, over which the Union Jack floats in undisputed supremacy. The country of the wildest fictions, its

real history abounds in incidents as strange as any which the imagination ever conceived; and from the time of Clive to that of Dalhousie, there has never been a period in the history of India in which the novelist, the poet or the political economist, could not find themes overflowing with suggestions for their peculiar pens. The land of the serpent, and the serpent-charmer—the land of the lion, the elephant and the tiger—the land of the Suttee and of the Thug—the land of the blood-thirsty Juggernaut and of the self-torturing fakir—the land of the warlike Afghan—of the gentle and submissive Hindoo—affords every variety of subject for the literary or political writer. Our business with it, however, at present, is merely to refer to the recent annexation to the British dominions of the compact and populous kingdom of Oude. This measure, though it may savour, in the nostrils of our brother Jonathan, of something akin to the American Eagle's swoop over Texas, Mexico and Cuba, we can assure our expansive neighbour, was imperatively called-for on behalf of humanity. The misery and oppression under which the helpless subjects of the deposed monarch groaned in unquitted woe—the cruel indifference of the sensual despot who occupied the throne—rendered it necessary that a kingdom so completely misgoverned should not imperil the contiguous British territory, by calling into existence bodies of discontented and turbulent marauders. The King was deposed, but in return for the sceptre which was wrested from his nerveless hand, he was allowed the munificent pension of £150,000 sterling a-year—a sum amply sufficient to enable him to gratify his personal tastes, and to maintain his personal dignity, without calling into exercise the miserable resources of oriental tyranny, to wring the means of luxury from the suffering millions who may be the subjects of a heartless profligate.

Another remarkable fact connected with British India is the active conduct of the Government in the construction of railways, carriage roads and gigantic aqueducts. Our space is too limited to allow us to give our readers the interesting details which recent English papers furnish us on these subjects, but no one can estimate the importance of these great improvements in such a country as India.

In connection with this portion of our subject, we may mention, as not the least curious event in the history of the last year, the fact of the mother of the "discrowned King" having taken up her abode in the modern Babylon, with a view to the reversal of the fiat which had gone forth against her child, "that the glory had departed from his house." Her Majesty has, we fear, made a bootless journey, and we notice her arrival in London merely for the purpose of directing our readers' attention to the singular fact of an Eastern Queen, surrounded by the peculiar pomp and circumstance of

The Edinburgh Review for Oct. 1855, contains an admirable review of a work entitled "The Private Life of an Eastern King," in which the tyranny, rapacity and cruelty practised by the Court of Oude are graphically portrayed. At the risk of being tedious, we make one or two extracts:—

"It is probable, indeed, that this world—the scene of so much misery—has never witnessed such a Government as that of Oude, unless it be thought impossible that any tyranny should surpass that of Nero or Domitian."

"Nine tenths of the population are in the position of the cottiers of Ireland. The possession of land is to them a necessity, the very vital element—if they have it not, they starve, with their wives and little ones. It is no wonder, therefore, that they cling to it with the same desperate tenacity which distinguishes the peasants of Connaught, submitting to any amount of extortion and wrong, rather than abandon it. Soberly is this the strain in Oude. The several districts are either farmed out, or are managed by Amils, who regard their offices only as a means of amassing wealth from the difference between what they exact from the ryots, and what they are compelled (for the process is often one of compulsion) to pay in to the royal coffers. Where there are Zemindars, the only difference is that another screw is interposed between the farmers general or amils, and the actual cultivators of the soil. The zemindars often exact payment from their ryots, and then hold out in their mud-forts against the amil, until the contending parties can arrange, after a certain amount of battering and a sufficient number of parties, the exact sum which will satisfy the royal exchequer, and leave a suitable balance for the benefit of the amil. Between such millstones as the amils and zemindars of Oude, the unhappy ryot is of course ground to powder. Besides growing the crop and paying the revenue, he is impressed by the zemindar to fight his annual battles against the amil, whose rabble retainers spoil his goods, and devour or drive off his cattle. The battles in question are of every day occurrence. A member of the House of Representatives, who has lately returned from a visit to Oude some years ago, he had heard the sound of artillery, either on the one side of his road or the other, on each of the first nine days of his journey. That was and is the ordinary mode of collecting the revenue from land-holders of power and courage sufficient to resist the authorities, rather than patiently submit to be plundered. When the end in view cannot be effected by these which we have truly called ordinary means, still stronger measures are resorted to without scruple. With the exact sum which will satisfy the royal exchequer, women and children into slavery, in order to make good a deficiency of revenue from the proceeds of the sale."

"The same despotic lawlessness pervades every department of the Government,—if a state of things so wretched be worthy of such respectable terms. Very recently the King appointed one of his fiddlers chief justice of the realm. Probably the judge was upon a par with the Court. Police there seems to be none for the prevention of crime; Government exists for the collection of revenue. Men are shot down in broad day-light close to the gates of Lucknow, and the murderer replaces the pistol in his belt, and deliberately walks off, without question or hindrance from any one. We are indebted to the surgeon of the British Residency, now a member of the Medical Board, for the following anecdote:—He had been out in the country to attend a patient. On his return to the city, he heard a pretty brisk fire of musketry, but such sounds were too common to excite any great surprise. After passing the gate, however, he found that two regiments of the King's army having quarrelled, each corps had taken possession of the houses upon one side of the principal street, across which they were keeping up a smart fusillade. When the officer, whose person and equipage were well known, approached the scene of action, a chief combatant of one of the regiments rushed into the middle of the street, and bawled out at the top of his voice, "Stop, stop! wait a minute till the Doctor Sahib has gone by!"

The following characteristic anecdote from the same source is worthy of quotation. If we could imagine that our contemporary the Islander was published for only one short week in his Oudian Majesty's dominions, and was characterized by its usual sickly attempts at wit in the shape of intercepted letters, how soon would printer, editor and devils share the fate of poor Rajah Buktar Singh!—

"Rajah Buktar Singh—a Hindoo, as the name indicates—was the general of the King's army, and chief of the police. Up to a certain minute he was the prime favourite of the King. Then he was disgraced and ordered for immediate execution, (with great difficulty averted), for the simple offence of making a bad joke. The King twisted his thumb through the top of his hat, and the general said, 'There's a hole in your majesty's crown.' Instantly went forth the mandate, 'Take off his head.' By means of the interference of the British Resident his life was saved, but he was literally stripped to the skin, of honour, property and clothes."

"All the garments of the disgraced chief had been removed—his richly-ornamented turban, his magnificent oriental dress, his turwar and sword, his pistols, his es-sabere scarf, used as a belt,—all had been removed. With a scanty cloth tied round his loins,—a cloth such as the lowest of the labouring classes wear,—he was lying, when we entered, on this uncomfortable couch, (a rough native bed, such as is used by native servants, without mat or mattress,) otherwise naked."

In Blackwood's Magazine for August, 1856, we notice an elaborate review of Lord Dalhousie's administration of the Government of India, in which the writer traces with a masterly hand the vast material improvements that have been effected in the newly acquired territory, under the direction of the distinguished statesman referred to. We can make room for only one short extract:—

"1349 miles of road have been cleared and constructed; 853 miles are under construction; 2487 miles have been traced; and 5272 miles surveyed—all exclusive of minor cross and branch roads. This was in 1855, and great lengths of road then under construction have since been completed. But take the statement as it stands, and realise its meaning. It tells us that, before the Punjab had been six years a British province, there were completed in it, or in process of completion, roads of sufficient extent to traverse thrice the length of Great Britain from John o' Groats to Dover—or, in other words, to form three parallel lines of good road from one end of our Island to the other;—while the 8000 miles of road projected, and already traced and surveyed, would suffice to form 120 roads crossing the entire breadth of our Island, from the German Ocean to the Atlantic and Irish Channel! Surely these are stupendous undertakings—and all within a single province of our Indian Empire!"

her native country—her eunuchs, veiled female attendants, and romantically attired servants, maintaining in the heart of London the sacred seclusion of the Zenana. Generally referred to in the English papers as the Queen of Oude, we have preferred designating her as the mother of the late Sovereign, as his ex-majesty's respected progenitor is reported to have had no fewer than some two hundred wives, and it might be a question which of those was entitled par excellence to the Sovereign rank, for we know that

"Love levels rank, Lords down to collars bears, And lifts the brawny porter quite up stairs."

Pass we now to the Cape of Good Hope—the scene of some of Britain's little wars, where we shall linger no longer than will suffice to state that another "little war" appears to be imminent; and, in fact, the outrages which characterize the preliminary stages of hostility, on the part of savages, have, probably, commenced,—to terminate in the loss of life and property by the frontier settlers, and the temporary defeat of the Kafirs, who will submit when their precarious and fluctuating resources shall have been exhausted; and who will renew the struggle at the first opportunity which may offer itself, after they shall have recruited their exhausted energies.

Come we now to Europe, and the state of Spain demands a passing notice at our hands. The student of history, as he contrasts the present with the past of this unhappy country, will have cause to exclaim—"How are the mighty fallen!" Spain—the land of the Moor—the native country of the Cid—the kingdom held by Ferdinand and Isabella—the country which sent forth Columbus to discover the New World—the country whence issued Cortes and Pizarro, which dominated the southern portion of this Continent, from the Mississippi to California—the country whose history is romance, the facts of which history are, indeed, stranger than fiction—the country whose treasure-laden galleons were once the envy of all the other European powers—the country which could equip and dispatch the armada against the English coasts—the country of the highest and purest chivalry—is now sunk into a depth of social and political demoralization which renders her almost a bye-word amongst the nations. In place of the high-born Spanish noble, and high-souled Spanish dame of the olden time, Spain offers to our gaze but the Sovereign of abandoned profligacy, and the unprincipled adventurer of the sword, as the controllers of her destiny.

Italy agitated as she is, and longing for fundamental changes in the systems of government which obtain within her borders, does certainly present a pleasing contrast to Spain. In noticing the state of the Italian Peninsula, we cannot pass without noticing the comparatively small kingdom of Sardinia, whose noble conduct in the late war has earned the admiration of the world, and whose constitutional government affords the only instance on the continent of Europe of a monarch relying on the loyalty and affection of his subjects for the security of his throne and dynasty.

Of the Austrian empire, composed as it is of different nationalities, kept together by the pressure of an enormous standing army and a gigantic system of police—we cannot predicate a future of prosperity. Made up of various fragments of territory which her central position in Europe gave her a chance of obtaining at the termination of any general war, she has contrived to absorb additions to her original purely German territory as heterogeneous as the contents of a shark's stomach. Italy, Hungary and Poland have each been forced to contribute to the widening of her skirts and the lengthening of her stakes; but the guilty usurping power is at ease amid the plunder about as much as the Southern slave-owner who sleeps with pistols beneath his head, as a protection against the passions of his victims.

Talking of slave-owners reminds us that a brief notice of our neighbours and their affairs may not be inappropriate. The spectacle which the United States have lately presented to the world is one which we think will go far to dispel the illusion which the theory of purely democratic institutions is so calculated to create. This nation, which boasts, as the foundation of its constitution, that all men are born free and equal, and with an inherent right to the pursuit of wealth and happiness, is not ashamed to hold in bondage millions of men, and the executive government of twenty-five millions is put in force to compel a poor unfriended fugitive slave to return to his serfdom; and he is told that for him the Declaration of Independence is a dead letter—that the greatest tyrant in the world is the British Sovereign, in whose world-wide dominions not a slave exists! Now, what are the moral and political effects of this "peculiar institution" of slavery? Start not, reader, we intend not a moral essay; but will leave you to answer the question after you shall have read the following statement of facts: A person holding the high and responsible office of member of the House of Representatives for California, while attending the Legislature at Washington, deliberately shoots a waiter on the floor of the breakfast-room of his Hotel, and because the murdered man was a foreigner and a sympathiser with slave-owners, in the capital of a slave territory, and because the murdered man was a foreigner and a manial, whose life was held in no higher estimation than that of a nigger—he is declared guiltless of any crime! The awful death of the murdered man broke the heart of his wife, who soon followed him to his tomb! Take another instance of the beautiful working of the "equality" theory: A member of the United States Senate, in his place in the Senate Chamber, dared to give utterance to his sentiments against slavery and slave-holders, and how was he treated? A ruffian, who was a member of the lower branch of the Legislature, the House of Representatives, attacked him whilst writing at his desk in the Senate Chamber, and striking him on the head with a budgeon, endangered his life. This was done in broad day, in the presence of several fellow members of the individual assaulted. This outrage, so unprovoked, so gross an invasion of the rights of a member of the Legislature—so atrocious an interference with the freedom of debate, in the Legislative capitol of the only free country in the world—was visited by what punishment, think you? A jury of his country found the offender guilty of the assault, as we have detailed it, and the Court (in this case the exponent of the popular opinion of the South on slavery), imposed a fine on the murderous ruffian of three hundred dollars! But these instances, gross as they are, and exemplifying as they do the demoralized condition of society in the States—a condition resulting from the influence of the democratic nature of these political institutions upon the "peculiar institution" of slavery—sink into utter insignificance when placed beside the events which have been witnessed in California and Kansas. In the former, we have seen the adoption of Lynch-law by the really law-abiding and law-loving portion of the people, who were compelled to the desperate resource of superseding the ordinary tribunals of the country, the machinery of which had, by the most rascally corruption

and fraud, been completely perverted to serve the vile purposes and interests of the worst portion of the population. In Kansas we have had presented to us the most revolting details of murder and rapine which the history of any part of the world ever exhibited. A set of ruffians, countenanced and supported by the Federal Government, have invaded the territory, set up a sham Legislature and Governor—ruthlessly destroyed the properties of the peaceable settlers, many of whom they murdered and scalped! and have, in armed bands, forcibly prevented intended settlers from entering the territory, whenever they supposed it possible that the immigrants might entertain a belief in the doctrine of the much-vaunted Declaration of Independence, that all men were born equal, with equal rights to the pursuit of happiness, &c. These proceedings in Kansas, and at Washington, arising as they do from the total irreconcilable antipathy between freedom and slavery—between intellectual power and brute force—between the speculations of the philosopher and the budgeon of the bully—indicate to us, pondering on them under circumstances removed from all that can tend to warp the mind from a calm and dispassionate review of the facts necessary to the formation of an impartial judgment—that the bond which holds together this bundle of sticks is so weak that the duration of the Union is not fated to be long, and that the respective stars and stripes which form the federal ensign will shortly be subjected to a division, in which each of the present constituents of the Union will receive as its future symbol its solitary star and its fragment of a stripe, as there are not sufficient of the latter to afford one to each. Sick of the contemplation of the profligacy and corruption that are sapping the foundations on which our common ancestors founded their beau ideal of a Republic, in comparison with which those of Plato, Sir Thomas Moore and Lord Bacon were to pale their ineffectual lights—we gladly ask the attention of our readers to the proud contrast presented by the country which we colonists on the western side of the Atlantic—notwithstanding the national prejudices and antipathies of some of us—are proud to call our home.

The world affords no stronger argument of the effect of free institutions in advancing the material prosperity of a people, than was afforded by Great Britain during the recent struggle. If an European peace for forty years had diverted the mind of a nation, essentially devoted to the arts of peace, from that attention to its military system which is the prominent object of most of the other European States—it appeared that the resources of the kingdom were sufficient to enable her to stand "confident against the world in arms." That glorious review of the squadron at Spithead, when the Royal Mistress of the proudest fleet that ever swept the ocean passed along the two lines of ships, each twelve miles in length! and then led off in grand procession of the whole—must have formed one of them, if not the most magnificent spectacle ever witnessed by man. The enthusiasm with which the myriads of her brave tars welcomed the Royal Lady—the cheering from so many throats—the saluting from so many guns—that wonderful illumination of the fleet at night—the voluntary and devoted homage shown to a delicate lady by the countless thousands of her subjects—must have demonstrated to the subjects of other Powers that the true elements of political greatness, the true source of a Sovereign's security, are to be found in the affections of a free people.

"What constitutes a State? Not high raised battlement or laboured mound, Thick wall or moated gate; Not cities proud, with spires and turrets crowned; Not bays or broad armed ports, Where, laughing at the storm, rich navies ride; Not starred or spangled courts, Where low-browed baseness wafts perfume to pride— No!—men, high-minded men, Men who their duties know, But know their rights, and knowing dare maintain— Prevent the long-aimed blow, And crush the tyrant while they rend the chain:— These constitute a State!"

The naval power of the nation having been so fully proven, the mind naturally turns to the military arm of the national defence, and when we read of Her Majesty attired in military garb, so far as became her sex, riding her palfrey, for the nonce converted by the adjuncts of the occasion into the deservier of the knight of the times of chivalry; and after the excitement and fatigues of the day, bivouacking for the night under a temporarily constructed roof, and guarded by the stout hearts and strong arms of the loyal men, who would each of them have met death ere harm should have come to her or hers—we are reminded of other British Queens, as Boudicca, urging her people to repel the all-conquering Roman, and rushing herself into the bloody field; and of Elizabeth exciting the enthusiasm of her gallant subjects when the then powerful Spaniard had launched against her realm the mightiest armament that up to that time had ever appeared in the "narrow seas."

Her Majesty's family has given a noble taste of its quality in His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge. Born of royal blood—nursed in the lap of luxury, with every thing around him to make life pleasant in a land of peace—with no imperative obligation on him to brave the perils and inconveniences of war—his generous nature scorned the ignoble life of the faincant, and rushing to the field, he shared the dangers and participated largely in the blood-embazoned glories of Alma and Inkermann. On his return to England, the people gladly acquiesced in his appointment as Commander-in-Chief, as being a worthy successor to the late Lord Hardinge, the hero of "Albuera, lavish of her dead."

In connection with the late war, no name appears so illumined with a halo of glory as that of Florence Nightingale. All our readers, we presume, are acquainted with the fact, that a young, high-born, and tenderly-nurtured English lady—animated by the spirit of mercy—left her ancestral halls, bade adieu, it might be forever, to her aged sire and the various members of her family—to carry comfort and consolation to the wounded, sick and dying in the teeming hospital of Scutari—to smooth the pillow of the dying warrior, no matter what his rank might be, or what his previous life had been. This model of Christian heroism is unparalleled. When the deadly fever was arising its hundreds of victims to those whom war had stretched upon the beds of torture, this lady might be seen, "in the still watches of the night," bearing her small lamp—visiting unattended, save by the unseen angel of mercy, of which to many of those whom she came to visit she must have appeared the incarnation—approaching the couch on which the rude soldier lay—soothing his bodily pains by the application of human remedies, and bearing comfort to his mind by those words which none can use so well as woman,