

## A RETROSPECT OF THE YEAR.

THE appearance in these pages of some record of the past scholastic year can call for no comment. The manner of its appearance may possibly excite some criticism. Practical minds will look for statistics and tables of comparison; historical minds would have the matter arranged in logical or historical sequence. How the petty sphere of our events would endure such processes we will not question, but a less ambitious attempt seems to us the more grateful task. We would wish, if possible, to retain that commonplace aspect of things which both annalist and statistician seek to avoid. Names and figures are always submitted to the public in some form or other, either at the period of the event, or at the times of the summing up of results—as at examinations, exhibitions, &c. The best comment on public events would be the record of the popular opinion of the hour. There is more possibility of embodying this in a desultory, gossiping form of narrative than in any more formal method. In some hope of achieving this, and in no depreciation of our subject matter, we will endeavour to revive the impressions left by the now closing year.

The reassembling in September, 1879, showed more recognition of the pleasure of each other's company than usual. The extremely wet vacation season did much to reconcile us to the meeting, and lent such an air of resignation to the act of reunion as almost to make a virtue of that grim necessity. A few bright, cheery days in early autumn dispelled the few vapours that hung about the beginning of work. There was not that bustle and excitement of change which of necessity accompanied the opening of the corresponding term of the previous year. Still there was some change—enough to exhilarate without disturbing, and to mark with more precision the beginning of term. Everything promised for steady work and fruitful result. The short months before Christmas verified the promise. The work was well marked out, and there was energy and determination brought to it enough to presage success. Of a beginning of work nothing more is to be said; further remark must be deferred till the results are submitted to us.

We could wish that the games of the opening term had borne so marked a character. Surely a determined and spirited com-

mencement of pastime can mean no less in its own province than of study. There is no game attached to the commencement of the season that calls for any show of public interest. Bat-and-ball, which is the principal game, is necessarily restricted. Few can play at a time, and few can play for any protracted period. A few took refuge in lawn-tennis, seemingly with tender recollections of vacation doings. It is with some interest we recognize the growing pretensions of this sport. Here may be the remedy for the deficiency we have spoken of. Tennis, if it succeed in asserting its sufficiency, as it promises to do, might with bat-and-ball absorb all the playing interest until the football season. The existence of a positive want makes us less severe in our scrutiny of its qualifications; while the knowledge of vigorous efforts being made to set the game afoot with every favourable condition of ground and material, gives us hopes of a speedy practical solution of the problem.

It is with some diffidence that we approach the subject of football. We shrink from recording the impressions left by the last season. We should be sorry to think that the existence of the English game of games was in any way imperilled. We cannot believe that a generation should arise so austere in its tastes as to be superior to the pleasure of the seat by the fire of a winter's night, with the wearied frame all aglow, and the imagination still warmed to action, re-enacting the triumphs of the afternoon, and planning more brilliant passages of arms for the morrow. Still there were unmistakable signs of a flagging of interest. The games were fewer, protests were more frequent, and the recusants were louder and more pronounced in opinion than the meagre elements of "tea-parties" in the former seasons. This may be the result of accidental circumstances, and we trust that the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of supplying its place, will preclude from us the fatal privilege of singing the dirge of football.

One symptom we are puzzled to locate in the diagnosis. This is the introduction of æsthetics in dress upon the football field. Our mind is not ripe to grasp the eternal fitness of colour and grace of raiment to the muddy throes of football. Certainly we could never have predicted that the slender defence of knickerbockers should be evolved as the resultant of the struggle for existence between the tibial bone and the well-shod human foot.

Having gone so far into the subject of games, we may as well finish with it. Skating, though it must always play a secondary

part in our muscular education, nevertheless holds a prominent position among the sports of the past year. We were fortunate both in the quality and the period of our skating season. Our status in the art has obtained a considerable ascendancy. Before Christmas even, the merest tyro had passed through the quadrupedal phase, and earned a place among the bipeds. The most flattering development, and certainly a new element upon our ponds, was the existence of a school of graceful skating which succeeded in reducing the number in our category of impossibilities.

Skating led us well into the spring-time. The practising for the athletic sports was a marked improvement upon that of the previous year. Comparison is scarcely fair, as the weather was more favourable. The events themselves, for the most part, were scarcely an improvement. There was little that was brilliant, and some that was below the average. The performance of the middle school was more spirited and enthusiastic throughout than that of the higher. If there is any definite remark to be made, it is that speciality was not sufficiently aimed at. The practice was too general and indiscriminate. Nobody seemed to know what he could do best, nor how much he could do. It is plain that all are not fitted to excel in everything; and when the performers come to action fatigued by previous efforts, in which probably they have had but moderate success, the events must inevitably be mediocre.

Rounders and horniholes are in season with the sports. They are both good, vigorous games, well suited to the uncertain season; while the latter offers more scope for precise and discriminate play than any other game save cricket. It was not played once during the season, and rounders only once or twice. Handball was not played this season, if we except a miserable show of a game on the first day.

The cricket of the season, if not universally successful, has been satisfactory. The Eleven showed a serviceable field and useful, steady bowling. The batting, with two or three honourable exceptions, was weak and not to be relied upon. The "tail" was very youthful, and the general physique of the Eleven not such as to overawe the average of teams brought against them. The middle part of the school bears much promise, and makes us look forward to the day, seemingly not far distant, when the proposed new cricket-ground will double the conveniences of the game, and—which is all-important—will give to the ordinary matches more

show of earnestness and of action than they have or can have at present.

We must not overlook the attempt at scientific and technical recreation made this year. The erection and fitting up of a carpenter's shop for the use of the boys is no insignificant event. The diminution of shavings since the commencement of cricket need cause no alarm. It cannot be meant to attract indoors, but to afford amusement and occupation when there is no going out. The anatomical laboratory has necessarily had fewer members, but with its limited crew it has offered unmistakable signs of activity.

A steady science-party, graced with several ineuphonic names, has been in operation throughout the year. The prize generously offered by a distinguished naturalist and a former student of St. Gregory's has been the occasion, though not the cause, of its development; for it must have been a genuine attraction towards their subject matter which could keep them so constantly at work throughout the year. Their energy has been displayed in the interests of the museum. Thanks to the Naturalist Club we may hope soon to have a good collection of local natural productions.

Here we may record our thanks to those of our friends who have helped us in this department by subscribing funds, and more especially objects of interest. In nothing are we so much dependant on external assistance as in this. Articles of vertu, under which, for the nonce, we would include the specimens of the naturalist, must always be classed under the head of luxuries; moreover, they have for their possessors a value beyond price. We should be ungrateful, then, did we not take advantage of the occasion to testify to our appreciation of the generosity of those who have sacrificed their private pleasure to the good of the community. We have some acknowledgments also to make concerning works of art. Within our limited sphere, these have latterly grown in importance. Interest first showed itself within our own circle. With the aid of friends we found that the value of some of our art treasures had been considerably depreciated, while of others it had been no less exaggerated. Some valuable presents were made to us. We may mention amongst others several excellently preserved engravings by Piranesi, handsomely framed, and a choice selection of the Arundel Society's publications. An exquisite miniature of St. Francis of Sales, also a present, has a more than artistic value, for the style of the frame belonging to it

shows that it must have been painted by a contemporary. We must also mention a collection of rubbings from monumental effigies, executed by the donor, and as interesting from their artistic mounting as from their antiquarian value.

The completion of the portion of the cloister of the new church, now in use as the monastery chapel, is a monument of something more than artistic significance. It is an earnest of a work which will do honour to St. Gregory's name in years long to come. There is other visible promise beside this, but the work of the past year has been rather with pen and pencil than with line and chisel. Criticism of plans and forecast of future requirements may make but little show; but those who have witnessed or shared in it, know its value in terms of progress.

This lengthy digression leaves us now free to follow the natural sequence of events. The autumn term offers little more that is worthy of note. The concert on St. Cecily's was purposely quietened in character, because of the proximity of the theatricals. The music was well chosen. The body of the performance was from the "Elijah." The dramatic nature of the oratorio renders selection easy. The parts performed were the Baal episode and the supplication for rain. The rendering of the Baal choruses with spirit and accuracy, as public testimony allowed to have been done, is sufficient testimony to the energy and proficiency of the singers. The descriptive nature of the music was more applicable to the audience than most music of the class.

The resumption of sock and buskin, after a lapse of two years, was unanimously approved of by the public voice. The play chosen was "Richard II.," ending with the deposition scene. The inexperience of the actors was the motive of such a choice. There is no need to point out the obvious objections to this play. The part of Richard was well sustained throughout. Several of the minor parts were well spoken, but there was a noticeable poverty of byplay. The mounting was brilliant. The farce or burletta, "Frederic of Prussia," followed, and met with exceptional success. Doubtless the heavy character of the tragedy aided its reception, but the farce itself, besides being exceptionally good, was well acted and well mounted.

The early months of 1880 have one very prominent memory—the visitation of the measles. It is not easy to sum up the effects of this visitation. The public mind, for a time, could receive no other subject. The public interest was absorbed in a perpetual neighbourly surveillance, and was never slow to detect symptoms

even where they did not exist. False alarms were constant, although precaution required the sequestration of the blackened individual. Constant exercise became necessary, and every advantage was taken of the fine bracing weather which happily prevailed during the period. This semi-quarantine lasted till mid-Lent, though for some time after we could not be sure that the evil was at an end. The effect on the year's work can be but vaguely imagined, but we can be surprised at no shortcoming after this. There is a bright side even to this gloomy subject. First, the measles were, perhaps, in our circumstances, the mildest among the choice of afflictions which seemed forced upon the country. To have passed through them with no fatal result is a subject of great thankfulness to us. Moreover, to have passed through them so cheerily as we did, must have affected considerably the "morale" of the establishment. Lastly, owing doubtless in great part to the precautionary measures, chiefly of fresh air and exercise, taken to prevent the infection, and to the beneficial effect of the measles themselves, the ensuing months have been especially free from infirmity cases, though there is no season in the year in which incautious youth pays so bountiful a tribute to *Materia Medica*.

Following close upon this visitation, and somewhat maimed of rite in consequence, came the celebration of the fourteenth centenary of St. Benedict. The utmost that could be done was done to add honour to the celebration. The short time left to issue invitations made us wonder that they were so liberally answered. The triduo has left a sunny memory. The daily panegyrics, the long and impressive ceremonies, imprinted the meaning of the feast on every mind. The spirit of the feast—the rejoicing of children in their fathers' honour—animated all, old and young;—the young with a seriousness and earnestness which it is a pleasure to recall. The distractions and worries that preceded the feast left little opportunity for the maturing of any design to memorize the occasion. Still, the published "Sketch of the Life and Mission of St. Benedict," and the cantata composed for the feast day and performed upon it, are both, in their provinces, the fruits of careful labour, and give honour to, as well as receive it from their noble theme. We all take pride in them, as efforts made to embody and utter a common sentiment of loyalty, and made under circumstances in every way trying and adverse.

Nothing more remains to complete this short memorial save to present the results (not yet attained) of the year's studies. We

have omitted nothing, we trust, that has been of any importance as a factor in the attainment of these results. Trivial as the events may seem, there are none without their bearing upon our aim and object as a College. It would be unfair to judge of the results without the aid of these. Not entirely free as they have been from anxiety, we look back upon the months past with joy and satisfaction, and part from them with regret. There is nothing of so grateful memory as the events of College life. And it is the privilege of those who are concerned with boys to share to a great extent in their way of judging of events—as of so many isolated facts, each proffering its own measure of care or leisure, of short-lived grief, or of brimming joy; and of the results themselves as of solitary, unaided events, summing up their meaning in the success or disappointment of the hour, with no reflection from the past, with no glooming from the future.

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ENGLISH PRIZE POEM—1879.

AN EVENING.

THE day is waning fast. The stalwart oaks  
Upon the broad green summit of yon hill  
Are casting on the turf their shadows long;  
While still with golden glories from the sun,  
Generous e'en in the hour of its decay,  
Their leafy rustling panoply is bright.  
But turn aside, mounting this eminence,  
And see where Severn's flood bears swift along  
Upon its heaving breast, whose little waves  
Still in the evening rays with laughter light  
Are gambolling, a fair white-wingèd fleet  
Of fishing craft, whose sails, but half distent  
With dying breezes, bear them gently on  
Unto the silver sea. When Nature rests,  
And Darkness keeps his sombre court, their prows  
Shall cleave the phosphorescent deep, and they,  
When all men sleep, shall sway with the long swell.  
And when the sun at morn, scepter'd in state,  
With gold shall crown the hill-tops, scattering