

THE
CHURCHMAN

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ART. I.—NEW YEAR THOUGHTS.

WE hail the advent of a New Year. We change the date which marks the current of earth's fleeting time. Thus this morning can scarcely fail to be the parent of most solemn feelings. May the Holy Spirit visit our hearts with the plenitude of His sanctifying grace!

Let us not pass this threshold without holding close converse with our souls. It should be among our earliest exercises to review the past. Let our conduct, then, in the last annual course, be brought as a prisoner to a searching tribunal.

An address designed for general reading cannot comprise particularities. Broad outlines only can be drawn within which each reader may trace the specialities of his own case. Individuality must do its own work. But let it be suggested, that each one as he probes his heart should use the Heaven-taught prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me." Then let meek contrition bewail the sad disclosures. For surely the page of the past will record a mass of evil. No shred of self-satisfaction can remain, and distinct instances will humble us as miserable sinners.

If reflection should be imprisoned within these limits there could be no escape from uttermost despair. But it is our happy privilege from the depths of self-condemnation to look to the heights of glorious acquittal. On New Year's morning then, let faith act strongly, hope shine brightly, peace flow calmly, and praises superabound. We are privileged to see Jesus—the everliving, everloving Saviour, seated on the right hand of God, having entered heaven with the offering of His most precious blood. We are called to view Him

obliterating every past iniquity: and rejoicing ears may drink in the word "Son, be of good cheer. Thy sins are forgiven thee." Thus the condemning crimson becomes whiter than snow. Grateful adoration should swell within: and we may enter another year fervently breathing, Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift: thanks be unto Jesus for His full salvation: thanks be unto the Spirit for the revelation of this Gospel.

Next, gratitude for experienced mercies claims its place. The retrospect tells that some who began the departed year younger and stronger than ourselves have ceased their course. Their opportunities are buried with them. We yet live: and means to glorify the Lord are ours. This grace thus vouchsafed to us demands thanksgiving. Memory too testifies that often in the past year we provoked the Lord to cast us away from His presence: but forbearing mercy beamed over us. Many temptations strove to roll us in the mire; but restraining grace kept us from polluting falls. Our feet often neared some fearful pitfall; but we escaped. Again and again we were enticed to stray into unrighteous paths; but a gracious voice counselled, "This is the way: walk ye in it." Our spirits were sometimes disposed to sink in billows of despondency: but a reviving smile raised us to go on our way rejoicing. Thus the sight of these Ebenezers gives proof that goodness and mercy followed us throughout the past year. Hence we are called loudly to utter the voice of praise.

Among our earliest acts it is our duty to fly on rapid wing to renew our dedication to the service of God. We feel with shame that in time past intruding lords have usurped injurious sway. Barriers should now be erected against recurrence of such invasion. Our God deserves our all. To our God all should be given. Vows thus early made will guard against declensions.

But general consecration may fail in particular force. It may be as the ascending smoke, the sport of sudden breeze. It is wise then to form definite resolves. Here the study of God's Word should be foremost in our determinations. We should early pledge ourselves to dig unweariedly in this field. Our primary search should be for the gem of gems, Christ Jesus. To learn lessons of Him is to grow in grace—to make each day a feast of joy, and to meeten for the inheritance of the saints in light. This exercise can never weary. It is a cup of inexhaustible delight.

It will be our wisdom not only thus to discover Christ as our full salvation—to rejoice in His finished work—to put Him on as the robe of justifying righteousness: but we shall thus be led to follow Him fully as our grand Exemplar. Let then the desire be kindled, that in this year Christ may dwell in us, our total life, and be our pattern in every step; and that in every transaction at home—abroad, His life should stand the sign-post of our path.

Each step will thus be raised above the mire of a defiling world, and each revolving day will witness in us transformation into heavenly likeness.

The year now dawning will probably give us leisure for instructive rambles in the fields of literature. Abundant choice is spread before us. No language exceeds ours in the treasures of grand and ennobling volumes. But amid the abundance calculated to elevate and delight, the annals of the heroes who have won triumphs in the fight of faith pre-eminently attract. Scripture presents holy precepts. In Christian biographies we see these precepts like a machine in motion. We learn in these pages what grace can accomplish in men of like passions and infirmities as ourselves. They were assailed by the arch-enemy who is ever active in his hostility against us. The same temptations which beset our path were not weak enticements to them. Our human nature was human nature in them. In their records we are taught how they used the weapons which are ready also for our hands: and we may daily learn to trust as they trusted—to hope as they hoped—to pray as they prayed—to fight as they fought—to overcome as they overcame—and thus fully to follow the noble company who through faith and patience now inherit the promises. These heavenly memoirs should not slumber this year on our shelves. It would be a pleasing task to supply a catalogue of these biographic portraits. But space utterly forbids. Suffice it to say, we walk with God when we walk in retrospective spirit with His favoured servants.

Perhaps foreboding thoughts may strive to mar our happiness on this morning. Apprehensions may intrude and ruffle the waves through which our barks must pass. We are entering on an unknown path, and it may occur that afflictions may be at hand. Let us bless our God that obscurity conceals the events of the coming days. If it were otherwise we should no longer walk by faith, but rather by sight. There would be no exercise for the sweet grace of hope; for “hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for?” Let it then be granted that we know not the future: but we do know that no blind chance turns the wheels of Providence, and that afflictions rise not from the dust. We do know that our “God worketh all things after the counsel of His own will”—that His will is love: and that “all things work together for good to them that love God: to them who are the called according to His purpose”: and “that all things are ours—things present and things to come.” We have the assurance that He “will never leave us nor forsake us.” We have heard the rapturous inquiry, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” We know the reply, “Nay, in all these things we are

more than conquerors through Him that loved us." We have heard the exhortation, "Fear thou not for I am with thee." Shall we not each one reply, "I will trust and not be afraid." Let us then enter on our unknown career with trust in the Lord firmly ruling in our hearts, and joy in the Lord shining on our brows. Each trial may seem for a little while to be grievous, but it will afterwards yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Each will come as a messenger to call us to the mercy-seat where we shall realise the smile of God, which smile is Heaven begun. Soon shall all tears be wiped from our eyes; and joys will commence of which eternity will be the duration.

We must expect, too, that this year will not be without its peculiar difficulties. Satan will not slumber. We must be on our watch-tower, and ponder the import of current events. The sons of Issachar are commended as "men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do." It is to be feared our troubles will not be of pigmy form. They will stand as giants well armed and strong. In too many quarters we may see proneness to slide downward from the high ground of Protestant light, and to turn indulgent glances to Rome's bewildering errors. The blessings of the Reformation are not now universally and pre-eminently prized. They fail to awaken the rapturous and grateful commendation which is undoubtedly their due. Shame that any son of England should close his eyes to the glory of that work! It rescued us from the vilest degradation, and from dangers which imperilled never-dying souls. It broke the shackles of base bondage. It brought back the reign of spiritual and intellectual brightness. It ennobled our nation as the nursery of what is free, and great, and glorious. We may be called this year to hear in too many places sneers bespattering our country's brightest crown; and to witness declensions from pure truth.

Let a notable instance be adduced. How often now is the precious Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood degraded into the mimicry of the idolatrous Mass. In too many churches our ministers imitate the dress and adopt the childishness of Sacerdotal imposture! To enumerate these signs of retrogression is pain from which we turn. But let us open our eyes widely to the fact that floods threaten to submerge our Protestant position, and let us take our station valiantly by the standard of the Reformation. Valour for pure truth is a good motto for this opening year.

From the clouds which overshadow us infidelity casts its gloom. Reason spreads conceited wings, and boasts that it can fly higher than the throne of God. It dreams that by some innate power it has discovered blemishes in revealed truth. It would uproot the grand foundation on which faith rests. It arrogates wisdom wiser than the All-wise. Thus

scientific researches have strayed into mazes of misguiding fallacy. This infidelity, which is becoming the fondling of these days, is not of recent birth. Since man has lived, feelings have existed, striving to usurp the throne of God. These baneful errors have been often combated, and often wounded unto death. But they revive, and wield again their blunted weapons, and propagate again their oft-refuted follies. They will surely meet us this year. Let us be ready, clad in the panoply of truth, bold to maintain that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and resolve to give place by subjection no, not for an hour, to those who would impugn the Bible—the Spirit's all-enlightening gift to man. May infidelity this year find undaunted and intelligent foes in us!

It is almost superfluous to exhort, that slumber should never be allowed to close our eyes without review of the preceding hours. As this morning we review the past year, so each evening we should review the past day. No words can be needed to enforce this duty. Let one inquiry never be omitted, "What good have I got—what good have I done to-day?" This search will quicken our steps to run with diligence—with zeal—with faith—with patience, our allotted course.

Moreover, when each morning dawns, the thought should solemnise our minds, we may have awakened upon earth for the last time. Death surely advances with ceaseless step. Let familiarity with its advent be encouraged. It is recorded of an eminent saint, that on each day, for a short interval, he reclined as on the bed of death, and closed his eyes as if things temporal had ever vanished. He then arose, as if to enter on a resurrection-life. To him when death should really come, it would not be as an unknown stranger. He would extend his hand to meet an oft-realised touch. Such habit would utterly wean us from all attachment to fleeting things, and make each day the vestibule of things eternal.

But if death should not bear us hence, the heavens may part asunder, and our returning Lord descend. Longing expectation should daily anticipate this bursting glory. An elder in the faith stated, that he lived with the last trumpet ever sounding in his ears. Let us thus always be ready to welcome the glorious consummation. The song of triumph would thus be ready on our lips, "Lo! this is our God: we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord: we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

Can there be a concluding desire for this New Year better than that each day should witness our use of the prayer ascribed to St. Patrick:—

"To-day, may the strength of God pilot me—the power of God preserve me—the wisdom of God instruct me—the eye of God watch over

me—the ear of God hear me—the Word of God give me sweet talk—the hand of God defend me—the way of God guide me. Christ be with me—Christ before me—Christ after me—Christ in me—Christ under me—Christ over me—Christ on my right hand—Christ on my left hand—Christ on this side—Christ on that side—Christ at my back—Christ in the heart of every person to whom I speak—Christ in the mouth of every person who speaks to me—Christ in the eye of every person who looks upon me—Christ in the ear of every person who hears me to-day.”

H. LAW.

ART. II.—EGYPT AS IT IS.

THE interest felt in Egypt is much greater now than it was some twenty or thirty years ago ; and of course the facilities for travelling, and the influx of tourists, make it far better known. Yet a cursory view of a country, taken by strangers ignorant of the language, &c., gives but a very faint idea of anything beyond the merest outside ; and besides, thousands of our countrymen cannot obtain even this cursory view. English libraries, however, abound in works on Egypt—works of every degree of merit, from the admirable and reliable volumes of Sir Gardner Wilkinson, Lane, and others of the same class, down to the shallow observations of some youthful traveller who has accompanied a “Cook’s party” of excursionists for a three weeks’ trip on the Nile.

How is it, then, that after all, we know but very little of the people and their ways, or even of the country ? Probably it is the rapid life and the less studious disposition (of the average class, that is to say) in this generation ; so this number, especially of young people, scarcely ever really *read* anything longer than a magazine article. A solid book is merely glanced over. Otherwise, how should we hear such questions as these—“Are the Egyptians a black race ?” “Do they speak always in Coptic ?” “Do you understand the Egyptian language ?” “Are Copts Mohammedans or Christians ?” &c. &c. A few observations from one resident more than eighteen years in the country may therefore be not without interest, in spite of the mass of information within reach.

The people demand our first attention. They consist (besides the foreign inhabitants, who are very numerous, and quite distinct from the natives and from each other), of three divisions : namely, the Copts, the remnant of the old Christian Egyptians who escaped the sword of the Moslem invaders, and remained faithful to their religion—the Mohammedan Egyptians, and the Turks. The second of these classes, the Moslem Egyptians, constitute by far the greater number of the inhabitants, and are