

The Presbyterian Review.

Vol. X.—No. 25.

Toronto, December 23, 1893.

\$1.50 per annum.

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

YEAR of sadness! year of gladness!
I am bidding you farewell!
Budding spring-time, smiling summer,
Autumn's golden glow as well,
Seated round the glowing embers,
While the moments steal away,
How the spirit stirr'd remembers
All the past—like yesterday!

Yes—the vigil we are keeping
Must be held with many a tear,
For the angels have been reaping
Precious buds and blossoms here!
Tears must flow o'er empty places,
The departed cannot come,
Hearts must yearn for vanished faces,
Though they've found a brighter home.

O! a year ago at midnight,
I remember well the prayer
That we mingled with thanksgiving,
For our lov'd ones far and near.
And though not as we would have it,
Was for some the answer given;
Yet the crowning of all blessings
Is for them a year in heaven!

Harp on Zion tell the story
Of life's struggles passed away
And we would not dim the glory
Of that joyous band to-day,
Oh! we would not stay and ponder
O'er departed joys too long;
But press on to join them yonder,
With no sorrow in their song.

May we leave thee,—year of sadness,
Bearing fruit for days to come!
Swelling thus perchance that gladness
Who prepare our welcome home!
Let our tears be turn'd to praising
That we labour not in vain,
Hallelujahs now they're raising,
Soon we too shall swell the strain.

THE NEW YEAR.

THE dawn of a new period of time inclines us to think of what the future has in store for us, but it also brings up once more the old counsels and the old encouragements. As the years pass away new notions float for a time on the surface of things, but the truths we learned in our childhood are still to us like a deep and calm river—a "river of God which is full of water." What can we think of at this New Year season better than the words of the Apostle Paul: "Forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before?" They are the words of a bright and delightful optimism, but the optimists have done more for the world than the pessimists, and if we have to choose between the two, we would say with a hearty colloquialism: "Give us the optimists every time." If ever these words had a true message in them they contain one for us to-day when we look forward into the misty and uncertain future, conscious of our weakness, and feeling that we might have done better we had really tried; oppressed by the mystery of life,

and the dispensations that we cannot understand. Do we want the long-faced sad-eyed pessimist to wail to us his Jeremiah's and to tell us that in all probability we shall do worse in the future than in the past? On the contrary we can only be "saved by hope." Let us hear the words of the hopeful man: words written by fettered hands, yet having a spirit that nothing could chain. They are words that could have cheered thousands, let them cheer us to-day and in their strength let us stand at this turning of the ways.

Even as a matter of practical policy it is better to be hopeful than downcast. The physician knows this and strives to inspire his patient with the hope of returning health. We are better at once when a bright, spirited Son of Consolation comes to see us, and one of the aims of the new year should be to become sons and daughters of consolation and encouragement ourselves. And we cannot think of a department of our lives; we can scarcely take up any smallest item of our daily round but it is gilded by the light of bygone hopes. Hope of alchemist toiling by his dim lamp; hope of explorer setting sail bravely into unknown seas; hope of mechanic busy in his workshop; hope of social or religious reformer—all these have helped to make the glorious day in whose light we live.

To forget the things that are behind is to adopt the attitude of progress. There are some people who, in a manner, live on their past reputation and are content to repose on the laurels awarded to something they have done in days gone by. They are always talking about it. They are like the aloe that blossoms once in a hundred years and they have had their blossom and it is over. They never forget the things that are behind, and they do not reach forth to those that are before. When we hear people talking of what they have done in the past we know instinctively that they are only vegetating now. The great workers are accustomed to think of their past doings with humility and even with a touch of noble discontent. "I am an unprofitable servant," are words that are whispered in the depths of many a great soul.

We do not want at this New Year's time therefore to be writing self-appreciative auto-biographies. Even written in the best style they would not amount to much and nobody would want them put into cold type. We want rather to realise the opportunity that now exists for us to love, to labour and to achieve. The sublime truths that God is love, and that all things work together for good cannot be enforced by any *a priori* reasoning, they rather appeal to the instincts of the human soul, and in the faith of them we can look on to the future with buoyant expectancy. We believe that the future holds for us opportunities of usefulness and happiness greater than any we have experienced in the past, and trusting as our fathers trusted before us, we go forth to meet the new year "forgetting the things that are behind and reaching forth in no half-hearted way to "the things which are before."