

Pastor and People.

LIFE'S REVIEW.

BY JOHN IMRIE, TORONTO.

The Old Year is dying,
The moments are flying,
On the "Ledger" of life may be seen:
Opportunities lent,
To be faithfully spent,
Whether "Profit or Loss" hath it been?

Doth the Old Year's decay
Leave us wiser to-day
Than it found us just twelve months ago?
Have we done what we might?
Have we clung to the right?
Does the "Ledger" a "credit-note" show?

Have we cause for regret
At the "losses" we've met,
Through sin, pride, or procrastination?
Let us humbly arise
And resolve to be wise,
The New Year may bring consolation!

To thine own heart be true,
For 'tis wise to review,
And a "Balance-sheet" strike without fear;
In life's sunshine or shower,
Let each bright golden hour
Be well spent as if Death might be near!

When our Lord shall appear
And our names we shall hear,
Sounded forth from the Great Book above;
May the record there show
That the "debt" which we owe,
Hath "been met" by His infinite love!

THE OFFICE OF PRAISE.

BY REV. J. A. R. DICKSON, B. D.

One of the greatest moral forces of human life is that just appreciation of action, or suffering, or being, which we term praise. It is nothing more than the fair and honest recognition in suitable words of the thing done or the state that has been reached. To praise God we have but to tell out His mighty acts. And what praise is in reference to God that it is exactly in reference to man. It is the simple truth and nothing more.

Praise is in many minds held in low estimation because it is conceived to be something totally different from this, namely, a wilful extravagance in statement that reaches out unto, and clasps hands with, untruth. Sometimes, no doubt, what is intended for praise becomes this foul thing, which is flattery, and not praise. It is not that true, lovely, chaste presence which may be introduced anywhere, but a presence to be hated and abhorred as destructive to all fine feeling, and of every right state of things. Praise is proper. Flattery is proscribed. One is healthful, the other is destructive. One is a blessing, the other is a curse.

And this ought not to be forgotten, that men love honest, straightforward speech of themselves. As Dr. Young rightly sings:

The love of praise, how'er concealed by art,
Reigns more or less, and glows in every human heart,

and being bestowed it will work no ill; rather, it will do unspeakable good. It is an inspiration. It penetrates more deeply into the nature, and touches more hidden springs of the heart than any other force that may be brought to bear upon it. It is not only oil to the wheels, making them move easily and smoothly, but it is steam to drive them with vastly accelerated speed. It takes away all irksome friction, and it imparts a sweet and pleasant motion. It causes wings to grow on the most un-angelic beings, which enable them to soar, when otherwise they could only creep. It is a mighty lightener of the heavy burdens that press down human hearts, it so ministers strength to bear them. Who has not had experience of the help and healing that come through a word of praise? Would that we knew how and when to use it! There is always opportunity for praise, for no man is wholly bad. Some good thing may be discerned in the very worst, if diligently sought for. What a lesson the Lord teaches us in His seven Epistles to the seven Churches of Asia! However far they had fallen, and with whatever sin they were chargeable, He always begins with praise ere He touches their offence. Just examine these epistles, and you will find in each of them the recognition of the good in them: "I know thy works;" then follow their excellencies, however faint or in firm, and then there follow their deficiencies, which must be made up. The temper and tone of these epistles are worthy of all acceptance. They set an example to all who would deal properly with the erring. But where there is no blame attachable to any, the way is open for an appreciative word. And how much that may do? Spurgeon, in one of his racy speeches, speaking of his own experience of success, says: "I remember when I came first to London preaching to eighty or ninety in a large chapel, but my little congregation thought well of me, and induced others to come and fill the place. I always impute my early success to my warm-hearted people, for they were so earnest and enthusiastic in their loving appreciation of 'the young man from the country,' that they were never tired of sounding his praises. If any of you," he continues, "are mourning over empty pews in places of worship, I would urge you to praise up your minister. There can be no difficulty in discovering some points in which your pastor excels; dwell upon the excellencies, and not upon his failures. Talk of the spiritual bene-

fit which you derive from his sermons, and thus you will induce the people to come and listen to him, and at the same time you will do him good, for the full house will warm him up and make him a better preacher, and you yourself will enjoy him the more because you have thought and spoken kindly of him."

There are volumes of wisdom in that brief statement. Everywhere it will bear putting to the proof. And the fact it states is not thought of half enough as one of the greatest and most helpful forces in church life.

In a late number of the *British Weekly* we have an interesting biographical bit from Dr. Dale, of Birmingham, which serves as an excellent illustration of this principle. He says: "There are times when the most buoyant sink into despondency, when a great chilling mist creeps over the soul of those who have the largest happiness in the service of God, and they feel as if all their strength were gone. Not very long ago one of those evil moods was upon me; but as I was passing along one of the streets of Birmingham a poor but decently-dressed woman, laden with parcels, stopped me and said, 'God bless you, Dr. Dale.' Her face was unknown to me. I said: 'Thank you; what is your name?' 'Never mind my name,' was the answer, 'but if you only knew how you have made me feel hundreds of times, and what a happy home you have given me! God bless you!' she said. The mist broke, the sunlight came, I breathed the free air of the mountains of God."

That is simply grand. A word in season, how good it is! How it cheers, gladdens, blesses the soul as with a benediction,

Praise is the salt that seasons righteousness.

There is but one character—who might be regarded as one—who relieves us of this duty. And who he is may be readily guessed—the man who commits the indecency of praising himself. Bacon says: "To praise a man's self cannot be decent, except it be in rare cases." But instances are not wanting of individuals so enamoured of themselves that they bulk so largely in their own eyes as to obscure the vision of any beyond themselves. Their own excellencies are so pre-eminent and so overwhelming to their own minds that they are constrained on every occasion to project themselves to the front with their *!!! ad nauseam usque*. They not only take credit for what they imagine they do themselves, they step beyond that, and take credit for what others do, reminding us of Lord Verulam's pithy sentences: "It was prettily devised of Æsop, the fly sat upon the axle-tree of the chariot wheel, and said: 'What a dust I do raise!' So there are some vain persons, that whatsoever goeth alone or moveth upon greater means, if they have never so little hand in it they think it is them that carry it."

We would never think, under ordinary circumstances, of asking any one to pray any of the prayers of Robert Burns, but the individual who is burdened with this excess of admiration for himself, to him we would commend this prayer:

O wad some bodie the giftie gie us
To see ourselves as others see us.

The most undesirable sight under heaven to reasonable men is the man who is so eaten up of self that he can see nothing beyond himself. To speak truth of such a man has always the appearance of speaking ill. And even this obnoxious individual would be helped by praise—not praise of that which he himself emphasizes, but of any meek and lowly graces that are overgrown, and nearly stifled to death by the rank development of this vice. Praise to these would be like light to the struggling flowers in the winter time. It would give them encouragement and strength, and in course of time take away the vitality from the roots of the vice, causing it to die—a death devoutly to be wished.

Praise, then, wisely employed is an instrument of the greatest value. We may not fear to use it. It is full of inspiration. It is an energy in the soul. It calls forth its powers. It sweetens life. It makes duties doubly delightful. It is as the branch cast into the bitter fountain. Think of this! So much does God believe in it that, in anticipation of the end of all things, He has put on record and held up before the eyes of men the "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." This has gone out with its quickening and uplifting force ahead of the time when it will introduce us into conditions for which it has in some measure prepared us. Let us understand the office of praise at home in the godly upbringing of the children, in the Church, in the ministry of the Word, and in the life of brotherly fellowship and communion, and in the world's broad field of battle, where so many forces contend for the mastery. And let us use it to strengthen and develop the good, the true, the beautiful, and to mortify and kill out the evil and the destructive. A grand field this force has among men, and its office is one of the noblest.

A GOOD WORD ON GIVING.

Dr. Parker says that in soliciting charitable and other subscriptions he has never had any difficulty or trouble with men who have given proportionately and systematically. "A man who does not give definitely, and who does not set down in his account book exactly what he does give, is apt to think that he is always giving. There is no falsehood larger and deeper than this in all practical life. If you will put down just what you give to charitable purposes you will be surprised at the end of the year how little you have given, yet you may have the feeling that you have been always parting with your money in response to benevolent appeals." Dr. Parker adds that those who have made a system of giving are the finest, strongest, sweetest-souled men he has ever met.

Our Young Folks.

MOMENTS.

God has sent us not a year;
But a moment have we here,
And the next is coming near.

Moment after moment, He
Makes the hours and days to be,
Thinking still of you and me.

Moments are his caskets meet,
Made to hold His gifts so sweet,
Made to bring them to our feet.

Some are stored with sleep and dreams,
Some are rich with golden gleams,
Out of some the salt tear streams.

Two things moments never miss—
In their heart God's word of bliss,
On their face His loving kiss.

One great moment long ago—
Angels singing all aglow—
Brought the Babe to manger low.

One great moment yet to be—
Angels' trump on land and sea—
Brings the Christ to you and me.

Speeding down from God on high,
Back again the moments fly,
Taking up our song or sigh.

THE NEW YEAR.

Boys and girls, by the time you read this you will have left one year behind and entered on another. Do you know what it reminds me of? I will tell you. When I was a little fellow at school I had to go up with my copy-book to the master as soon as I had finished it, in order to get it exchanged for a new one. Then began something I did not always like. The master took the completed copy-book, and beginning at the first page, he slowly turned over the leaves, inspecting my work. As the leaves turned over my head bent lower. Here was a big ugly blot on one page, there a mis-spelling begun in the top line and carried right to the foot of the page, in another place a straggling line with the I's and t's leaning over as if they were too weak to stand, and again, the letters at the end of the line crushing one another all out of shape. When the master finished his inspection and looked up with reproach in his eyes, I assure you I didn't feel very comfortable.

Now do you know that we have all been doing the same thing within the last few days? I have just been giving in a finished copy-book to the great Master. He gave it me a year ago; then it was clean, and white, with three hundred and sixty-six pages—a page more than usual—and at the top of every page a beautiful line of His own writing, which He told me to imitate. All last year I wrote a page every day, and on the last day of the year I handed in the finished book. Then came the inspection. Oh, how ashamed I was! Here a great blot, there a slip, and so on throughout the whole year. My book, once so white and clean, was soiled and scored, full of misspellings and omissions and corrections. Then the Master looked at me as He once looked at an apostle who denied Him, and I tell you, boys and girls, the look of loving reproach was hard to bear.

I wonder if you too have been giving in your copy-books, and if it has fared with you in the same way.

But now we have got out fresh copy-books, white and clean, with a beautiful headline on every one of the three hundred and sixty-five pages. I don't know whether we shall live to finish the book; but this we can do—we can say, I am determined to make this year better than last. Do you know how I made so many blots last year? I was careless; I often set out on the day's work without seeing if my hands and heart were clean and without thinking of the difficulties that should meet me during the day. And do you know why I made so many slips and misspellings? I didn't always keep looking up at the Master's head-line. When I wrote the first line I did indeed look to the top of the page; but when I came to the third and fourth lines, I am afraid I looked to my own previous writing, and not to the Master's. But this year I am determined to follow not my own past work but His. The motto I should like to take for 1890, in order to make it a happy New Year—a motto I should like you to take also—is this,

LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

THE FAITH OF LITTLE HANS.

The following touching story, told by a writer in *Harper's Young People*, is about a letter found by one of the clerks, a young German girl, in the Dead Letter Office at Washington.

The young clerk had worked her way down through a large heap, and was beginning to think of lunch, when she came upon a peculiar little envelope addressed in German to "Jesus, in Heaven;" she tore it open hastily, and found a soiled sheet, written all over in a child's cramped hand. Some of the words seemed blurred with tears, and she could scarcely make them out.

Here is the translation:

"DEAR JESUS:—I have prayed so hard to you, but I guess you could not hear me so far off, so I am going to write you a letter. We came over a big ocean when it was summer time. My mamma has been sick all the time. Can't you send her something to make her well? And, dear Jesus, please send my papa some work to do, so he can buy us some warm clothes