

Stop and Set It Right.

History tells us of a hero who, when an overwhelming force was in full pursuit, and all his armed followers were urging him to more rapid flight, very coolly dismounted in order to repair a flaw in his horse's harness.

While busied with the broken buckle, the distant cloud swept down in nearer thunder, but just as the prancing hoofs and eager spears were ready to dash down upon him, the flaw was mended, the clasp fastened, the steed was mounted, and he vanished from his enemies. The broken buckle would have left him on the field a dismounted and inglorious prisoner. The timely delay sent him in safety back to his cheering comrades.

This is the season when everyone, even though they laughingly disclaim any intention of turning over a new leaf or making good resolutions, must stop and think. Not even the most thoughtless can pass lightly by the dying year. Those who rush on with the new year stopping to make no prayer for strength, not questioning the cause of their weakness in the past nor seeking to set right the wrong done, are like the warrior with his broken buckle. They many seem to be valiant warriors, but there will be no escape for them from the powers of evil and their Prince.

The watchnight service is not held by all churches, some choosing rather to begin the new year with the prayer meeting at sunrise, but everyone should make some time to 'Tarry and watch,' perfecting their armor, gaining new strength for the struggle and storing up a reserve of self-control, courage and power, to use in the service of the Prince of Peace!

A Few Questions.

The year has closed, and before promises are made for the future an examination of the personal past becomes the Christian, as he sits alone with his conscience in the church of which he is a member, or in the prayer-meeting that belongs to him as much as to any other, official or private, or as he sits before his class in the Sunday-school. If he only fills these chairs at the public services he will not likely feel the great weight of responsibility that attaches to him as a servant of the Master and a representative of Christ's working church, but if the review of his life is frequent and his self-examination thorough and often, he will not shrink from the questions that come before him in such solemn procession at the year's end. They are personal questions. Questions with which no one has to do but himself, and which at the peril of his own peace of mind he will not set aside. Here are some of them, and let the answer be to God:

Have I attended to my personal devotions?

Have I remembered every day that I was not my own?

Have I lived each day as I would have lived had I thought that few days remained to me?

Have I attended upon the Lord's Day services with regularity? or have I excused myself for reasons that should now make me ashamed?

Have I met with my brethren and sisters weekly at the prayer-meeting? Or

have I left that service to others, and served my own love of pleasure, and thus cultivated a sinful neglect?

Have I taken any interest in the different branches of work in my own church, and in the broader work of the denomination through my church's agency?

Has my class in the Sunday-school learned from my example that religious duties have precedence over all other duties, except in cases of necessity at home or misfortune to others?

Have the members of my class had occasion to think that I cared for anything as much as I cared for their souls?

Have my lessons always been prepared with the leading thought of bringing Christ to those of my class who are unsaved?

Have they, from my example, learned to stay from the school service whenever a slight indisposition might excuse, or a slighter inducement tempt me to absent myself from the class and indulge myself elsewhere?

Have I been reconciled to anyone from whom I was alienated, or tried to reconcile others whom I know to be estranged?

Have I remembered those who needed my help; and called upon those who would have been cheered by sympathy?

Have I forgotten myself, and remembered those whom others would be likely to forget?

Have I visited the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and kept myself unspotted from the world?

Have I the courage and the grace to answer these questions severally and alone before God?

Trust for the New Year.

With open eyes that look on God

My daily journey I pursue,
I do not dread His lifted rod,

Why should I fear what love can do?
And if I need that He chastise,
Is He not good as He is wise?

I know, if I but follow Him,

I shall be safe from harm and make,
Albeit all the way be dim,

Nor slip, nor failure, nor mistake;
Or, making such, He will ordain
What seems my loss shall prove my gain.
—Caroline Atherton Mason.

'The Lord will Provide.'

'Write deep in your hearts this New Year's day the word of sublime confidence, Jehovah-jireh. It tells you that you can trust God always; that no promise of his ever fails; that he doeth all things well; that out of all seeming loss and destruction of human hopes he brings blessing. You have not passed this way heretofore. There will be sorrows and joys, failures and successes this year, just as there were last year. You cannot forecast individual experiences. You cannot see a step before your feet. Yet Jehovah-jireh calls you to enter the new year with calm trust. It bids you put away all anxieties and forebodings.—'The Lord will provide.'—Rev. J. R. Miller, D.D.

God will not love you any more this year than the past year; he cannot. But the vast difference that this year may hold over the last is that we may come to love God more and understand better his great love for us.

A Happy New Year.

In the first days of a new year we all say to our friends and neighbors, 'A Happy New Year!' Our hearts are full of generous feelings and wishes for all we meet. But what can we do to give them a happy new year? We cannot know what would be the truest and best blessings for our friends.

After all, the only really safe thing is to pray that God may be with them all through the year, and may bless them in his own best and truest way. He knows better than we do what is the best blessing. This was the way Mrs. Browning put it:—

God be with thee, my beloved—God be with thee!

Else alone thou goest forth
With thy face unto the north,
Moor and pleasance all around thee and beneath thee,

Looking equal in one snow!
While I, who try to reach thee,
Vainly follow, vainly follow,
With the farewell and the hallo,
And cannot reach thee so.

Alas! I can but teach thee—

God be with thee, my beloved—God be with thee!

Concerning New Leaves.

When Father Time turns one, it brings an odd little thrill even to the most matter-of-fact person. We are like children with a wonderful picture-book, whose next page may show roses or dragons, seraphs or Cinderellas, an ogre gaunt and grim, in his cave of bones, or a fairy god-mother with her wand. Half the charm of it lies in the uncertainty. It was Theocritus who—

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Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals old and young.'

The years do, indeed, come bearing gifts. Each year, too, brings its renewed opportunities and obligations, and though homilies easily become trite, there is none worth repeating, so obvious is its wisdom.

Do the nearest duty, howsoever humble. It may prove the stepping-stone that will help to better things. If you can conquer your failings one by one, take heart and thank God.

No year can be all sunshine, and never a one but will have its storms. There will be clouds and rain, with clear shining after them. If the new year bring shadows, accept the divine appointment. Remember:

'Too much of joy is sorrowful
So grief must needs abound;
The vine that bears too many flowers
Will trail upon the ground.'

If, on the other hand, it bring full brightness, try to share this with some gray life that is perishing for warmth and color. So shall you multiply the glory of good fortune, as a diamond refracts and multiplies the glories of a sun ray. The blessedness of giving is a sacred privilege, whether you distribute smiles or roses, cheery words, or coin of the commonwealth. Who so exercises it abundantly, and with love, will have truly