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A Happy New Year

The closing of the year is calculated to turn our thoughts in two opposite directions, namely, to retrospection and speculation—to the past and to the future. The old year lies behind us, with its joys and sorrows, its loves and hates, its successes and failures; the New Year is before us with all its possibilities of hope and earnest striving. In spite of all our clinging to life, there are few who would care to live the old year over again. We are rather inclined to be content to live under the pleasing delusion that the future will be vastly different from the past. And so it may be, if we live it, utilizing the past for the betterment of the future. This is the grand lesson—the lesson of experience—to be gained from the past—to profit to-morrow by the mistakes and failures of yesterday. No matter what the evidence of the dying year may be, whether telling of sorrow, remorse, or a tender, melancholy joy, the keynote of the New Year should be hope and the courage to do—to do better, to strive more manfully towards human perfection than in the past. And so we count up our losses and gains, close the books and open a new set. This is the wise, manly, Christian thing to do—and the process may remind us of our own personal account standing in God's ledger, to be closed, surely closed, in His own good time, when we humbly say "we may be ripe for the gathering."

For us, the first day of the New Year has a special significance, as marking the event in our Lord's life which, humanly speaking, made and marked Him as one of God's chosen people, bearing before all men that sacred name, Jesus, which has since become the strength and consolation of so many millions of the human race. On this day we celebrate the fulfilment of the Jewish law, the everlasting covenant established by God with Abraham, by the Infants Saviour. The ceremony is briefly recorded by St. Luke, the faithful historian of our Lord's earliest days, as follows: "And after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised; his name was called Jesus, which was called by the Angel, before he was conceived in the womb."

For the Angel had said: "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus."

And so it was done, and the first day of the year, the eighth day after the Nativity, is known in the Church Calendar as the Feast of the Circumcision. Connected as it is with the birth of our Divine Lord it partakes of the spirit of that joyful festival. The Church robed in all her Christmas splendour joyfully celebrates this supplemental feast to the Nativity. She sings, as she sang on Christmas Day, Isaiah's prophetic verse: "For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called, Wonderful Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the World to come, the Prince of Peace."

And so also does the royal "David's song of joy that was to mark the beginning of a new time: "Sing ye to the Lord a new canticle; because he hath done wonderful things. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God."

A peculiar interest attaches to the

coming year, inasmuch as it is the last year of the nineteenth century, and hence his Holiness, Leo XIII., with all the ancient authority of the Father of Christendom and with the devout acceptance of all the faithful, has proclaimed and published it to be the Holy Year. Nothing escapes the watchful eye of the Church, and extraordinary concessions and arrangements have been made to mark this the closing year of the century in a manner befitting the true spirit of Christendom. But with reference to this great jubilee year, we cannot do better than quote the Holy Father himself in his proclamation he says: "The century, which by the grace of God we have ourselves seen almost from its commencement, draws rapidly to its close. Willingly have we followed the institutions of our predecessors in so ordering things that they may redound to the good of all Christian peoples, and which may be perhaps for them the last proof of our care in the government of the sovereign pontificate. We speak of the great Jubilee introduced in ancient times among Christian nations, and observed by our predecessors, who bestowed upon the years of general jubilee the title of the Holy Year, because it was usual for such a year to be blessed by a greater number of holy ceremonies, as these furnish the most copious means of help for the correction of morals and the leading of souls to sanctity."

Following the high example of his Holiness, we too would do well to lay out our plans on a more humble and individual scale to make the best of the coming year, and doubtless many will do so; for New Year's resolutions are wont to be as plentiful as blossoms on the tree, but only a small proportion of them ripen into the maturity of fruit. Good resolutions they are which would be productive of good results if only steadily adhered to. But there's the rub! The way of the resolutionist, like the proverbial way of the transgressor, is hard, very hard, especially for those who have been long accustomed to the more pleasant modes of existence. Yet, we are inclined to believe that it is good to make good resolutions, in spite of the awful saying about them. Certain it is that they will never be in operation unless they are made, and the will to do is more than half the deed done. The trouble is that we resolve without taking into consideration the possible obstacles that are sure to lie in the way of execution. We view the future without reference to the past—and allow it to break upon our mental vision as a picture in which all perspective is lost. We do not, will not, see that the same temptations, difficulties, dangers are sure to beset our path in the future as in the past. And thus the rosiest future that was to have been so productive of good and desirable results deteriorates to the level of the past, making the ever-present one continued struggle, in which the will is worn by the overpowering force of habit long established and by associations renewed and continued to the destruction of all progressive effort.

Realizing the fact that it is easy to preach, but hard to practice, we are fain to conclude this homily by wishing our readers, one and all

A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Jubilee Year.

The institution of the Jubilee dates back to the year 1300, possibly earlier, when Pope Boniface VIII, issued a bull granting a plenary indulgence to all pilgrim-visitors to Rome during that year on condition of their penitently confessing their sins and visiting the church of St. Peter and St. Paul, fifteen times if strangers, and thirty times if residents of the city. It is recorded by a contemporary chronicler that the response to the Pontifical invitation was such that the constant number of pilgrims in the city of Rome never fell below 200,000. The name Jubilee is derived from the Hebrew word Yobel, the name given by the Jews to an institution by which every fiftieth year the land that had passed out of the possession of those to whom it originally belonged was restored to them, slaves were released from bondage and all debts were remitted.

As instituted by Pope Boniface VIII the Jubilee was to have been held every hundredth year, but Clement VI, in obedience to an earnest request from the people of Rome abridged the time to fifty years. Pope Clement's

Justice accordingly took place in 1300 and was even more numerously attended than was that of Pope Boniface. The term between successive Jubilees was further shortened by subsequent Popes to twenty-five years—and such has continued to be the arrangement for the ordinary Jubilee. The jubilee extraordinarily proclaimed by the Pope out of the regular period, as on the occasion of his accession to the chair of St. Peter, or on some occasion of public calamity, or some crisis in the fortunes of the Church. Already pilgrimages to Rome for the purpose and objects of the Jubilee are in various countries in process of organization—notably in England—and the great Jubilee of 1900 promises to be not less numerously attended than those of previous periods.

The Sovereignty of the Papacy.

In spite of the wide-spread desire that the Vatican should be represented at the Peace Conference held at the Hague, owing to the machinations and hostility of the Italian Court, no such representation was granted. In view of the ancient custom of looking to the Pope as pre-eminently the Father of peace, and the well known personal wishes of Leo XIII. in that direction, it was a matter of serious regret to all the Catholic world, that the authorities who convoked the Peace Conference should, at the instigation of the Italian Government, have put such an indignity upon the Pope. As an outcome of the unjust exclusion of the Papacy from the Peace Conference, and the accompanying ignoring by the power of Europe, of the Papal claims to sovereignty, Mgr. Gibboin, in a recently published work, entitled "Lezioni di Diplomatica Ecclesiastica," by a masterly exposition establishes conclusively the rights of a veritable and plenary sovereignty to the successor of St. Peter. The following interesting passage in connection with the sovereignty of the Papacy will no doubt prove of interest to our readers:—

"According to the authors of International Public Law, a State loses its sovereignty in the following ways: when it is really united to another State, or when it is incorporated in another State, or when a partition occurs. There was no real union between the Roman State and the Italian State; This point is clear. The second possibility is explained as follows: "As a matter of fact, the Roman State was almost integrally incorporated in the Italian State. But on this fact, this incorporation, be held as sufficient for the destruction of the temporal Papal sovereignty? Such incorporation has no juridical value in international law. For the incorporation of the Roman State in the Italian would have to be effected by war, but war is of itself unable to juridically solve any question; as long as the war lasts, the old right remains suspended, and therefore the new right remains in doubt; it is in consequence necessary that the war should come to an end in order that it may be definitely settled to whom the victory belongs. Now, between the Roman State, personified in the Pope, and the Italian State, the war has not ceased at all."

And, as the author very cleverly points out, this must be the status of the Papacy, because war must end either with a treaty of peace or an absolute and definite cessation of hostilities, or by the submission of the vanquished—three hypotheses, none of which is verified in the present case.

The Catholic Standard and Times referring to the growth of the idea of arbitration and the peaceful solution of disputed questions connected with international affairs, very pertinently asks: "Where will the Papacy be in all this during the twentieth century unless it have a sovereign status? Every day sees an expansion of its power as a State. States that have never been represented before in these very days send Ministers to the Holy See. What will be the status of the Papacy in such matters if non-sovereign? if merely a political club? a pious society? an amiable association? But there are a hundred contingencies which the up-to-date reader will imagine for himself, and which show that in Italy and throughout the world the Papacy should have a recognition of its double sovereign status—as a tangible national and international entity with full rights, national and international, deriving to it sufficiently, first, from its spiritual leadership, and secondly with equal sufficiency, from its temporal status—sufficiently from each source apart from the other. But it is because the last six months have shaped a new reason of time in for this consideration that we are much indebted to Mgr. Gibboin for his treatment of it in a work richly stocked with modern data, and references."

The Conversion of Dr. DeCosta.

The New York Critic, a clever and well-written paper of no particular religious complexion, except that it is non-Catholic, has the following to say in connection with Dr. DeCosta's conversion to the Catholic faith.

"Dr. DeCosta's change from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism was not unexpected by those who knew how deep was his resentment against the sanction of the 'Higher Criticism' implied in the admission of Dr. Briggs to the Episcopal priesthood. Like all such protests by extremists, it does not at all help the matter, for the mass of Protestants who do not care to go over to Rome, because another Protestant is curious about the human amusements of diabolical bits of the Bible. What he has to say of the general sapping of belief of the vast number of people having no connection (or a barely formal one) with any Church is, however, significant."

It is significant and so considered. That a gentleman of Dr. DeCosta's eminent ability, high position in the church he has abandoned, and acknowledged standing in social and literary circles, should leave all to obey the dictates of conscience leading him into the bosom of the Catholic Church, is sufficient to furnish food for thought to people interested in religious matters.

There is much to be learnt by non-Catholics from the fact itself, but more still from the masterly "apologia," written and published by Dr. DeCosta, who it would seem, is determined not to do things by halves, but as far as possible to be a light unto many of his brethren who, as he writes, are wandering in the darkness of doubt and uncertainty. In that remarkable document, the author states his conviction that the Catholic Church is the True Church, because she alone of all religious bodies professing Christianity, is capable of defending the truths of revelation and the written word of God against the violent attacks of unbelief, and of guiding and guarding her children against the pitfalls of error.

We say with profit, perhaps, to our readers, recall one notable passage which occurs in Dr. DeCosta's statement, of his reasons for becoming a Catholic, because it demolishes the absurd contention that converts to the Catholic faith relinquish their free will. It reads as follows:

"It is time for candid non-Catholics to address themselves to the subject of infallibility, and learn that the notion that it interferes with individual liberty is as true as that the mariner's compass renders the sailor an abject slave. Without instruments and guidance, the sailor would be as free as the ancient Siodonian in his favored galley with purple sails, without even an astrolabe to take the height of the pole star, dead-reckoning and guessing his way, gazing with strained, uncertain eyes over pathless sea and perilous shore. The freedom that the devout Catholic loses is the freedom to lose his way in storm, and night, and fog."

The Catholic Church has Nothing to Conceal.

One of the most difficult things is to convince some Protestants that the Catholic Church is not a secret society, and it is almost useless to combat their deep-rooted idea. "There is a Freemasonry in the Catholic Church," they say. "She has secrets to keep back. She has one set of doctrines for bishops and priests, and another for the laity. She has one creed for the initiated and another for outsiders."

To such insinuations or distinct charges there is but one answer—in the words of Cardinal Gibbons, "Every thing in the Catholic Church is open and above board. She has the same doctrine for all—for the Pope and peasant." The cause of this delusion on the part of Protestants seems to be traceable to two sources, the unity in belief and doctrine, and confession. All Catholics most certainly profess the same faith, believe the same dogmas. The Church is One, just as she is Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. And instead of keeping anything back or of hiding anything from public view, she calls for her assistance every means human and Divine, to make known her doctrines to the whole world. True this sameness of belief, of aims and doctrines puts a certain characteristic stamp upon her children; but there are no secret signs or cabalistic formulas used among them. They know their religion, openly profess it, are always ready to publish it to the world, and, safe in the harbor of the one true Church of Christ, mildly wonder at the way in which their

non-Catholic brethren allow themselves to be tossed about on every wave of so-called religious reform and progress.

As to that other most sacred and useful institution, confession, that awful bugbear to Protestants, the only secrecy about it is the secrecy most solemnly enjoined on the Catholic priest never to divulge what has transpired between him, God's representative, and those who come to confess their sins and seek absolution—a consolation above all other comfort in the world.

In his words addressed to non-Catholics, especially to those who are earnestly and conscientiously seeking after the truth, Cardinal Gibbons says:

"Consider what you lose and what you gain in embracing the Catholic religion. "Your loss is nothing in comparison with your gain. You do not surrender your manhood or your dignity or independence or reasoning powers. You give up none of those revealed truths which you may possess already. The only restraint imposed upon you is the restraint of the Gospel, and to this you will not reasonably object. You gain everything that is worth having. You acquire a full and complete knowledge of God's revelation. You get possession of the whole truth as it is in Jesus. You no longer see it in fragments, but reflected before you in all its beauty, as in a polished mirror. Your knowledge of the truth is not only complete and harmonious, but it becomes fixed and steady. You exchange opinion for certainty. You are no longer 'tossed about by every wind of doctrine,' but you are firmly grounded on the rock of truth. Then you enjoy that profound peace which springs from the conscious possession of the truth."

"In coming to the Church you are not entering a strange place, but you are returning to your Father's home. The home and furniture may look odd to you, but it is just the same as your forefathers left it three hundred years ago. In coming back to the Church, you worship where your fathers worshipped before you, you kneel before the altar at which they knelt, you receive the Sacraments which they received, and respect the authority of the clergy whom they venerated. You come back like the Prodigal Son to the home of your father and mother. The garment of joy is placed upon you, the banquet of love is set before you, and you receive the kiss of peace as a pledge of your filiation and adoption. One hearty embrace of your tender Mother will compensate you for all the sacrifices you may have made, and you will exclaim with the penitent Augustine: 'Too late have I known thee, O Beauty, ever ancient and ever new; too late have I loved thee.'"

"A Bystander" on Italian Unity.

"A Bystander" in the Weekly Sun offers the following very interesting comments upon the subject of Italian unity:

"It is the general cry, especially here in Northern Italy, that Italian unity is a failure. A failure Italian unity, the glorious work of Cavour, Garibaldi and Mazzini, is not. It was a grand and indispensable step in advance. It could not be expected at once to make a magical change in the character and habits of the people. If it has failed to produce its full measure of good effects and has produced some very bad effects, effects even so bad as to make the people look back with regret to the rule of their former masters, this is the fault, not of its authors, but of those into whose hands their work of regeneration has fallen. Italy is not qualified to be a first rate power, or to take part with such nations as England and Germany in controlling the general councils of Europe. Substrat the mountains, and Italy is a small though very fertile country, while there neither is nor is likely to be much trade except at Milan, Genoa, and one or two other places. But Cavour and other politicians since Cavour have attempted not only to place Italy on the footing of a first rate power, but to launch her with England and Germany on a career of imperial aggrandizement, which in her case ended in the fatal Abyssinian war. For the purpose of this policy they have loaded her with an army and navy preposterously out of proportion to her magnitude and financial resources. The son of a queen is a grinding taxation, the Government buying its ham's every product of labor and article of consumption, monopolizing the sale of salt, and as a last resource, raising a revenue by a lottery, which not only fishes the earnings, but aggravates the gambling propensities of the people. General discontent and bread riots, attended here and at Milan by bloodshed, have been the natural result."

We are glad to be able to quote such an eminent authority upon a question which has for the Catholic world a special interest. It may be observed that "A Bystander" first positively asserts that Italian unity is a failure, and then proceeds more

loosely to show how very near it comes to actual failure. In fact, according to the above showing, the evils resulting from the scheme in its workings so predominate, that the writer has forgotten to omit the good results, which by inference must be many. If we may be permitted to take a liberty with Shakespeare, we may appropriately conclude that the evil Italian unity does, will live after it; the good will be interred with its bones. And if the picture of the actual condition of the people of Italy which "A Bystander" presents to us is a faithful one, the sooner this mad people destroy the monster praying upon the national vitals the better.

Of course, the responsibility for the present wretched condition of the Italian people, must be placed on somebody's shoulder, and so "A Bystander" unconsciously avails himself of poor Orsini and others, overlooking the fact that his precious trio of arch-robbers, Cavour, Garibaldi and Mazzini, must take their share of the blame for rendering such rank tyranny and oppression possible. It was they who conceived, achieved and gave the impetus to the grand scheme of Italian unity, which their successors in office, following upon the original lines, have made, if not a failure, then an admirably framed machine for squeezing and sucking the life-blood out of a too confident but duped people. Verily this is all that we can make of the workings and results of Italian unity as so ably put through by "A Bystander."

THE RIGHT AND THE WRONG OF IT.

The columns of the newspaper press have lately with it, special magazine articles by competent authorities in the region, pamphlets and books have written one another to do justice to it, and yet the world is divided on the formidable question of the right and the wrong of the Boer war.

The Jameson Raid undoubtedly inspired just that amount of feeling between Britain and the Transvaal which made the question a burning one, and the Raid rebounded to the discredit of the instigator thereof, and from the partial and unsatisfactory character of the trial and punishment of the chief offenders therein put Britain in the wrong in the eyes of the not over friendly continental powers.

Trouble was bound to come, and it has come with a vengeance. Mr. Chamberlain claimed that the Outlanders were unjustly treated in the matter of the franchise. Then when President Kruger's unwilling to submit that question to arbitration, the Colonial Secretary shifted his ground to the claim of a definite sovereignty over the Transvaal and refused to refer the matter to arbitration. In 1892 a convention was made with representatives of those Boers who dwell beyond the Vaal River, guaranteeing them "the right to manage their own affairs, and to govern themselves according to their own laws without any interference on the part of the British government." Two years later a convention held at Bloemfontein declared the Boers to be "a free and independent people" by "a free and independent people."

By these conventions the independence of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were established and recognized. Later the Transvaal was conquered and made a British dependency, but was only so held for a short time. In an article by Professor Bryce in the North American Review furnishes the following quotations to a writer upon international law: "There is no doubt that whatever, according to Mr. Bryce, says this writer, 'that under the convention of 1854, which fixes the relations of Britain and the South African Republic, the latter had the right of interfering with those affairs than with the affairs of Belgium or Portugal. No doubt, Britain retained the right, which every state possesses, to interfere in behalf of its subjects when they are being injured in any foreign country. Mr. Bryce declines, however, to admit that the grievance of British subjects were so serious as to contribute a proper cause belli; on the contrary, he says 'in my opinion, not so serious as has been frequently alleged.'"

That the South African Republic was conceded the most complete control of its internal affairs, and that the British paramountcy over that State was abolished or at least so modified as not appear to be quite so certain. Although the word sovereignty was not formally employed on the convention of 1854, the idea of British sovereignty was more than implied therein, it being distinctly stated that the British Government retained the right to march troops through the Transvaal territory and not make treaties with outside foreign powers without the consent of the British Government. The fact that President Kruger elected to issue the Transvaal practically declared his uttermost and practical intention did not count for much in the eyes of the other as far as the merits of the question are concerned. If any such was on the part of the Boer President to precipitate the war at a moment when the Republic was in a financially efficient state of preparedness and the British wholly unprepared to enter upon so serious and extensive a struggle.