

Our Contributors.

A FRESH START IN A NEW YEAR.

BY E. H. HONOLIAN.

One of the best things about New Year's day is that it gives one an opportunity to take a fresh start in life.

A fresh start is a real good thing. Our Creator provided for fresh starts by putting a night between every two days and a Sabbath between every two weeks.

If a man hadn't a fresh start on a small scale every morning he would die or become insane in a few years. After a hard day's work with hand or brain, even the strongest men are likely to become weary, nervous, irritable and despondent. The world looks blue and the Church seems going to ruin. Go to bed early, take a good, sound, refreshing sleep of eight or ten hours and everything seems different. The difference is not in the Church or in the world, it is in the man looking at them. The environment is the same: the man is toned up. Now he takes a fresh start in the morning and works on bravely. The fresh start did the business. Giving thanks in the morning for the morning's fresh start is a more important part of prayer than a petition for the return of the Jews to Jerusalem. Perhaps the Jews are just as well where they are.

The fresh start of Monday morning is worth millions. Almost everybody has it but the preacher. One of the drawbacks of clerical life is that a preacher has to begin every week with the vitality pumped out of him. You go down town for your mail Monday morning and see your parishioners—merchants, lawyers, business men of all kinds—buzzing around, full of life and energy, ready for another week's work, while you have a kind of all-gone feeling that almost makes you wrestle with the fundamental problem, "Is life worth living." The chief difference between them and you is that they are having the fresh weekly start that our Creator provided and you are not. They rested yesterday and had their nerves toned up; you worked and had yours run down. There is no power in words; no power in figures to tell the value of this fresh weekly start. The Sabbath would be one of the greatest blessings God has given to His creatures if it did nothing more than give weary human nature a fresh start every Monday morning.

There is something about the beginning of a new year that may be made very helpful in giving us a fresh annual start. Call that something sentiment, if you will. A rose smells just as sweet by any other name. There may be little or no actual difference between Tuesday the 31st day of December, 1895, and Wednesday the 1st day of January, 1896, but there is a mighty difference in one's mind, and after all the mind is the man. Tuesday is the day for looking back, Wednesday is the day for looking forward and taking a fresh start.

What fresh start are you about to take? Never mind what cynics say about New Year resolutions. The desire to do or be better that leads a struggling soul to make a good resolution is itself a good thing. It shows that there is still some hope in that soul—still a longing, however feeble, for a better life. Besides the difference between the man who breaks his New Year resolutions in a month, and the man considered a model, is, so far as resolutions are concerned, only one of degree. Is there a good man anywhere who can lay his hand on his heart and say he has not broken a thousand resolutions—resolutions made at the communion table, made in sickness, when death seemed near, made when there was a coffin in the front room, or a hearse at the door. A fresh start in moral and spiritual things is good, and if made in humble dependence on a higher power may be the turning point in one's life.

A fresh start in modes of work may be a good thing, and the beginning of the year

may be a good time to make it. We don't believe in pulling up flowers every day to see if they are growing, but there is a good medium between uprooting flowers and pouring the same quantity of water on them at the same minute all summer and doing nothing more than that to promote their growth. Every man who works might improve himself and his work by introducing occasional little changes, and the beginning of a year seems a peculiarly suitable time to try the innovation. (Innovation is a dreadful word in Presbyterian circles.)

Few workers have as much to fear from monotony as Presbyterian pastors have. The conservative forces of the Church are almost invincible. Any kind of a change is sure to meet with determined opposition. For intelligent conservatism we have the highest respect. It is the bulwark of the Church. Even illiterate, unreasoning conservatism has its uses. There are radical elements in most Presbyterian bodies on this continent that if not kept in check would not only destroy the distinctive character of Presbyterianism, but would wreck the body in a few years. A minister is in danger of getting into humdrum habits just because he knows that a considerable number of his people like to have things done in "the good old way."

Is there any necessity for this danger? Not the slightest. There is plenty of room for variety in the most vital work of a minister, no matter how conservative his surroundings may be. Did the most conservative Scotchman that ever denounced the organ, ever quarrel with a judicious variety in the sermons of his pastor. Did the wildest Ulster man that ever pronounced judgment on the hymns ever complain because his pastor changed the threadbare phraseology of his prayers. Did you ever hear an iron-clad Covenanter threaten to fight because his pastor read the Scriptures well—one of the rarest qualifications in the gospel ministry. Did anybody ever hear of a man so "fogeyish" that he threatened dire calamities because his minister did pastoral work too systematically and too faithfully.

The fact is, there is plenty of room within Presbyterian lines for every pastor, elder, Sabbath-school teacher, Christian Endeavor missionary man or woman, for every worker of every kind to take a fresh start this week and do better work than ever.

There is a remote possibility that even a theological professor might take a fresh start.

Let us all try.

A WORD TO MORAL REFORMERS.

BY REV. W. A. MACKAY, D.D.

At the late International Convention of Christian Endeavor in Boston, some one said, "With America for a fulcrum and the Cross for a lever, we'll raise the world to God." Whatever may be said of the soundness of the fulcrum, the lever is all right. Faith in a crucified Redeemer is the only lever that will ever uplift poor fallen humanity. I point to the "submerged" classes of our large cities—three millions in England alone, and I ask what is to be done for them? "Secure better sanitary regulations," says one. Certainly. Cleanliness is next to godliness, and fresh air is conducive to good health and good morals. "Secure lower rents," cries another. That also is worth striving after. "Give them higher wages." By all means let the poor be well remunerated for their work. "Abolish the liquor traffic," demand a thousand voices at once. And we respond with a thousand hearty "amens." While these drunkard-making factories stand on our street corners, sanctioned and protected by law, there will not be much headway in uplifting the masses. But suppose all these external conditions secured, would that suffice? It would not. Thousands of men would be

piggeries still, and many homes would be haunts of wretchedness still, and many children would be "born criminals" still. What, then, is wanted? I reply, make Christians of them. Let these outcasts be "born again." Then they will love the things they now hate, and hate the things they now love. Put new hearts and right spirits within them, and the uplifting work is begun, and will assuredly go on. This is the work of God the Holy Ghost, but He will effect it in answer to your prayers and efforts. What a striking illustration of the hopelessness of effecting a permanent reform by merely changing the external conditions of the people, we have in the history of New York during the last year or so. Little more than a year ago, at the trumpet call of Dr. Parkhurst, that modern Presbyterian Joshua, the people of that great city were aroused; and by the power of their ballots they turned out of office those corrupt officials that for years fattened upon bribery, lawlessness and lust, and great was the shout of victory among the better classes of the country. But stop a little, only external conditions are changed. The wolf is a wolf still, and the tiger is a tiger still, though driven for a little while from their lair. Only one short year has passed by and New York, like the sow that is washed, has returned to her wallowing in the mire. Tammany has won, and why? The answer is not difficult. The reform was only in appearance. The sepulchre was whitewashed, but it remained a sepulchre still, and full of corruption within. External conditions were changed, a set of rascals were turned out of office, but the hearts of the people were not changed, and to-day the rascals are back again in office, and the last state of that city is likely to be worse than her first. There was really no moral victory a year ago: it was a mere political, and therefore temporary triumph. The appeal of the good and brave Dr. Parkhurst was not so much to the conscience of the people as to their self-interest. The cry was not, God is in it, but there is money in it. And so Tammany was defeated, not because it was wrong, but because it was supposed it would pay. The appeal was not to conscience, but to supposed self-interest; but during the year thousands of people in New York found it did not pay them to have good laws enforced. Particularly, saloon-keepers found that it did not increase their gain to be forced to close their saloons on the Sabbath. And as gain, not right, was what they wanted, they changed their minds and voted Tammany back again. Expediency led them to vote one way a year ago; and now the same expediency has led them to vote the opposite way. Could anything more clearly show the utter folly of attempting to uplift the masses by a mere change in their circumstances, while the heart is left unregenerate and wicked as ever. No, the Gospel and it alone, is the power of God to raise the fallen, to rescue the perishing. It speaks to the high and to the low, to the educated and to the ignorant, to the cultured and to the coarse. The heart may be very gross and dull, and almost insensible to every high and noble appeal; but the transforming knowledge of the love of Jesus can make it thrill with excited gratitude. The solemn revelations of eternity can awaken the terror, can fire the hopes of the coarsest and most degraded. The unspeakable tenderness and beauty of the old, old story of the life and death of our Saviour, can bring tears to eyes that never wept before. Here, then, is the uplifting force for the lapsed masses. We write not to discourage earnest and well-directed efforts in ameliorating external conditions, but to point out the true and only method of promoting any real or permanent reform. Bring the sinner, however hardened or degraded, before the cross; there let him see the bleeding wounds, let him hear the dying cries, let him be assured that all this the God-man suffered in his stead; and in the bands of the Holy Ghost this mighty truth will reach the intellect, and fill the

heart, and control the life, and make the man pure and happy and Christlike. He will be saved from sin now, and saved for heaven hereafter.

Woodstock.

PUBLIC WORSHIP.—NO. III.

REV. DR. LAING.

Convener of Committee on Public Worship.

SIR,—In my previous communications I referred to the usages of the Church now followed in conducting public worship, and I have pointed out what, in common with many others, I feel to be in need of amendment. I have alluded to the action which is being taken in other lands to remove objections and to effect changes not out of harmony with the principles of the Reformed Churches, or with scriptural requirements. I shall now more particularly refer to the direction which modifications may take in Canada.

The principles of Presbyterianism are unalterable, but the history of the Church establishes that the system admits of changes in practice when such are required. The introduction of instrumental music may be cited as an illustration. Forty years ago the proposal to place an organ in a Presbyterian church created alarm; it was declared by such men as the Rev. Dr. Candlish to be incompatible with and subversive of the principles of Presbyterianism. Thirty years ago the actual introduction of instrumental music in Old Greyfriars, Edinburgh, startled and shocked many of our people; such a thing had been unknown in the Church of Scotland from the era of the Reformation. To-day, the organ or other instrument is generally welcomed in all our places of public worship.

There are far fewer objections to form of prayer than were entertained to the introduction of musical instruments. The latter were not recognized by the fathers and founders of the Church, while the former were sanctioned by them and regularly read in public worship for generations after the Reformation. The introduction of the one was an innovation not warranted by any traditional standard, while that of the other would be merely the restoration of an ancient recognized mode of worship. The re-introduction of written prayers is perfectly justifiable on historical grounds and would simply be the revival of an old practice which has lain dormant in the Mother Land since the time of enactment by the civil ruler, as absurd as it was cruel, that the use of the old Scottish Service Book was illegal. The use of that Service Book, although dear to the hearts of Presbyterian congregations, having been made an offence against the laws, the Scottish people were forced to abandon it. They would, however, use no other Liturgy, and from that day the mode of worship became non-liturgical and has so remained.

I do not advocate the re-introduction of the Scottish Service Book known as the John Knox's Liturgy, or indeed the use of any Liturgy, although it must be recognized that such an aid to devotion would enable congregations to participate in public worship to a much greater extent than at present. Were such a mode of worship desirable, before arriving at any conclusion it would be well to consider other Presbyterian Liturgies which have continuously remained in force since the time of the Reformation, several of which rank higher in some respects than the old Scottish Service Book. Besides the Scottish type of Presbyterianism, we have the Dutch, the German, the French, the Swiss and the English; and in addition to the Liturgy of Knox there are available for consideration the Liturgies of Calvin, of Lasco, of Polanus, of Bucer, of Melancthon and of Baxter, the latter being remarkable for its simplicity, appropriateness and fulness, and held by some authorities to be perhaps the best Liturgy known. Even the Church of England Prayer Book