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Selected Articles.

ENGINEERING—PAST AND FUTURE.

Standing on the confines of the old and new year, it is at once pleasant and profitable to withdraw our attention for the moment from the present, and direct it to the past and to the future.

These are so linked and bound together as far, at least, as regards the progress of science, that none but exceptionally constituted minds can perfectly dis sever them. We perforce mix up the teachings of the past with all our schemes for the future. The prophet involuntarily become a historian, and the historian, if he give loose for ever so little to the reins of fancy, finds the future continually obtrude itself upon his thoughts. Thus it becomes all but impossible to record the progress of events during the last twelve months without noticing the schemes for the ensuing year, which have their true origin in bygone successes. Each step leads to another, and as the engineering year has neither beginning nor end, save in a conventional and arbitrary sense, so it becomes difficult to separate that which has been done from deeds still to be accomplished. Yet nothing can so well enable us to comprehend the enormous influence exerted on our material prosperity by the engineer, as a calm and dispassionate consideration of the past. The history of the constructive arts is a record of a succession of unparalleled triumphs. The members of our profession can say with truth that they have never been beaten as a class. The individual may have failed; his art, never. No other profession can assert as much. Physicians, soldiers, lawyers, have been overthrown, *en masse*, time and again in the very moment of apparent victory. Disease still stalks through the land, and its power is not less now than it was centuries since. In only a single direction can the doctor claim to have successfully combated death; yet it is more than questionable if he could have materially reduced the death rate of our large towns, whatever he might do in rural districts, without the aid of the engineer. Great wars have terminated without bringing either glory or profit to the soldier, and where a different result has been brought about, it has of late years been invariably due to the skill of the engineer. The strong arm of the law is not yet strong enough to beat down crime. It has been said that the worst use to which a man can be put is to hang him, and justice has found that the criminal in the hands of the engineer may be still made to subserve a good purpose; convict labour has not been found wholly unproductive. All that the engineer has ever undertaken he has accomplished; and at this moment, that man who would argue that any one of the many schemes discussed in engineering circles *could* not be carried out, must possess extraordinary audacity, or know very little indeed of the scientific history of the last half century. Such is the position to which we have attained, that it is now urged but too often that engineering questions are settling down into mere commercial problems. This is going too far; and the confidence of the capitalists in the skill and talent of the engineer, leads him to overlook the fact that money cannot take the place of mental ability and vast experience. Indeed, at no time has talent been in greater request, more urgently needed, or more liberally displayed than at present; and the younger members of the profession will find on examination, that as many opportunities for acquiring distinction existed in 1865 as in any of those years to which they look back with regret—years in which they urge there were yet so many