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## Sunday School Banner

W. H. WITHROW, D.D., Editor

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## The New Year.

THE close of the old year and the beginning of the new is a most fitting time for retrospection and reflection. Then, if ever, should even the most frivolous bestow a moment's earnest thought upon the past, and seek divine aid to essay the duties of the future. Standing as we do, in "the centre of immensities, the conflux of eternities," all things conspire to make us feel that our lives are rapidly sliding away, that they shall soon have passed for ever. The successive New Years are milestones, as it were, by which we measure our progress through time.

As travellers who cross the Alps, climbing the hoary mountains' sides, gain broader, clearer vision, and a wider horizon; as they look back upon the path by which they have ascended and perceive that its devious turnings were necessary to avoid some crevasse or overcome some

difficulty; and as, gaining the summit of the pass, they behold the fertile plains of Lombardy and the far-shining city of their pilgrimage; so, to us, the New Years are hilltops, as it were, whence we may look back on all the way by which the Lord our God has led us, and from which, looking forward, we may get clearer views of the end of our journey, of the goal of our hopes.

Our life's pathway may often seem rugged and devious, but from the vantage-ground of added years we gain wider horizons, and, at last, from the supreme vantage-ground of heaven we may discern that all life's devious ways have been part of God's great plan; that we have been led by a way that we knew not, by a way that we might not have chosen for ourselves, but by a way that has been wise and good and true.

At these memorial seasons we are especially reminded of the shortness of life and the flight of time. In Holy Scripture the most fragile and ephemeral things are chosen to represent the duration of human existence. Man's days are a handbreadth, and his years are as nothing in the sight of God. He is like grass that in the morning flourisheth and groweth up fresh and fair and gemmed with dew, but which in the evening, dry and dead, cut down and withered, strews the ground. Like the flight of an arrow through the yielding air, or the gliding of a keel through the returning waves, that leaves no trace behind—like anything most evanescent—such, in the sight of God, is the life of man.

## The Christian Year.

ONE of the complaints made concerning the International Lesson System is that it does not sufficiently recognize the great festivals of the Christian year—Christmas, Palm Sunday, Easter, Ascension, Whitsuntide or Pentecost. The system is based upon a wider and, we think, a wiser principle. Its purpose is to take the scholars over the whole of the Old and New Testament Scriptures in about seven years. In this course all the events of the Christian year are fully recognized, and all the Christian doctrines are inculcated. The lessons also arrange that appropriate teachings shall coincide with the two more important of the Christian festivals, Christmas and Easter. In 1901, however, it would interrupt the important story of

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