

THE DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN

LOOKING BACKWARD AND FORWARD.

The Cumberland Presbyterian.

Another tick of the clock of time! That, after all considered in the light of all the world's history, is about all that can be said about this passage from an old year into a new, with all of its attendant celebrations, heart-searchings and good resolutions.

New years have come and gone—how many times? Looking back upon them it would be difficult to say what influence they have had upon the human race, difficult to know whether any New Year's Day was ever a really turning point in the life of any man; yet it is certainly an excellent habit, this habit of expecting and resolving and planning to do things better or to do better things with the beginning of a new year. It is well to cultivate the habit of pausing at least once in twelve months to look backward over the way that we have come and forward along the way that we hope to go.

The standard of the present is not the standard by which to judge the past or plan the future. That is one of the things we would do well to remember as we stand at the parting of the ways, seeking to estimate the value and influence of the things which lie behind and the wisdom and righteousness of the things of which we dream. That which we did yesterday should be judged by the standard of yesterday; that which we plan to do to-morrow will be judged, rightly judged, by the standard of to-morrow.

We did not live yesterday in the light of to-day, but in the light of yesterday. If only we lived up to the light that we had then, there is no occasion for remorse because we did not live up to the brighter light, the higher ideals, which came with the new day. There is some tendency to value our own past and to judge of the deeds of our forefathers by the standards of wisdom and righteousness which we possess in the present, and the result is that we pass undeserved criticism upon ourselves and others. In a recent magazine article, Dr. Charles F. Aked wisely said: "We are not called to sit in judgment upon the past for any other purpose than that we may live better in the present and the future. Things were done in the past without protest which we now consider wrong. It is the part of a minister of Christ to encourage the growth of a conscience which shall judge fairly the men who in the past did things which nobody then considered wrong and a conscience which will neither desire or permit these things to be done in the future." The two sides of the truth which we would suggest are presented in that paragraph.

Not only is it unwise to waste time in useless regret, because last year was not lived up to the standard of this year, but it is wise to face the truth that the standard of the present will not suffice for the year that is to come. However, we may be unable to estimate the influence of any one of these "turning points" of time, it is unquestionably and gratifyingly true, that at least in Christian countries, the moral standards of the race have been lifted higher and become purer and better with the passing years. That process still goes on. Little by little the ideals which influence Christian men are approaching the divine ideal. More will be expected of us in the year to come. We will expect more of ourselves. How, then, shall we start the year? With the determination to be and do all that we feel to-day that we ought to be and do? No, it will be better to start with the purpose to be and do just what is made clear to us that we ought to be and do as the new days come. Will those new days demand more of us than is demanded to-day? They ought to and they will. Will we go forth on the journey through the new year determined to

respond to all their demands? That is the vital question.

Let us not make the mistake of starting off to live through the new year on the dead level of to-day. Perhaps that would be the easy way; it is not the heroic way, not the Christian way. Has it been a hard climb this year up to the height which we have now attained? There are higher heights ahead; let us plan to mount them as we come to them. Ob, yes; there will be those who ask, What use? There will be those who would discourage our endeavor to reach the higher levels. Our experience will be like that pictured by Longfellow in his famous poem: The old man warned; the maiden lured;

"Beware of the pine tree's withered branch!

Beware of the awful avalanche!" This was the peasant's last good-night; A voice replied, far up the height, Excelsior."

So may we pass through all the year—through all the years, till new years are no more and the new life has begun—responding to every voice that speaks, "Higher! higher!"

THE BIBLE PREACHER—AN ENGLISH VIEW.

If the first thing to be sought is that we may be charged up to the point of saturation with the influences of the Spirit of God, the second thing is that we should understand how to saturate the outward mind with a knowledge of the Scripture. For a bibleless preacher to venture upon a Christian platform is as bad as for a prayerless professor to frequent the bedsides of the sick and the dying. The devil laughs at such an one, and very often the people laugh at him too. He may make the most brilliant epigrams, tell the most engaging stories, repeat the titbits from the most trustworthy newspapers (if there are any trustworthy newspapers); but after a time the epigrams are out of the epigrams, the stories have become stale, and the newspapers are back numbers. On the other hand, a biblical preacher gives his message in language that is better than his own, and his subject matter does not wear out nor grow old; he is occupied with an everlasting gospel, and the Spirit of the Lord honors his preaching by attaching to it permanent results in the conversion and sanctification of individual men and women. The Bible preacher does not go out of date, because the Bible itself has not gone out of date; on the contrary, he is more in demand than ever, and the cry of the churches that are eager for spiritual life must surely be very much like the message that was sent after my late friend Edward Millard, who some years since visited the mission churches in Armenia. "Send us," they said, "some more Bible preachers." A persecuted and suffering seed of the kingdom knows what is best suited to its conditions, and what suits their condition is like to be also the proper cordial for ours.—Dr. J. Rendel Harris.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS.

MON.—Live the eternal life (Matt. 19: 16-26).
TUES.—A man that lived for self (Luke 12: 16-21).
WED.—How Jesus lived (Heb. 12: 1-5).
THURS.—The life of faith (Matt. 5: 19-20, 25-34).
FRI.—Looking beyond (2 Cor. 4: 16-18).
SAT.—The abiding life (1 Cor. 13: 1-13).

Man's neglect of God's benefits puts him below the animals that "know" the hand that feeds and governs them. Some men think it a token of superior culture, and advanced views to throw off allegiance to God. It is a token that they have less intelligence than their dogs.—MacLaren.

LIVING FOR THE DAY OR FOR ETERNITY.*

Eternal life means life that is above time and all earthly vicissitudes. "Eternal" refers to our relation to the fountain of life in God, and the relation of life to God. "This is life eternal, and they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." This is our Lord's definition. We are living the eternal life here and now when we are living to God, when God's judgments are our judgment, when the life of God is in us as the spring of all our life. So we live by the abiding principles and unto abiding result.

The question is, shall we live in this way or amid the interests of the passing day alone, entangled and confined among the things that will not last. Now as a matter of fact, every one has to act with reference to the unseen and the future. The farmer sows the seed, expecting the harvest. The banker lends money on intangible security. The railroad builder lays out his line in the confidence of future development and the profit which it will bring. But how far behind the material and how far into the future shall we look? Only so far as we can see financial gains? Are there no gains of greater value? Are there not things above money and which money cannot buy? Indeed, many, and we are to live for these.

The great mass of the world's work must be in the never ceasing fulfilling of the prayer which Jesus taught us,—"Give us this day our daily bread." And there are great and useful services open to men which yet certainly will not abide. In his book in India, Dr. Jones tells of one of these, "The Perway Project." "It consists in the diversion of a large river which vainly poured its treasures down the western mountainside in to the Arabian Sea, and causing its waters to flow into the eastern plains to fertilize the thirsty land as far as the Bay of Bengal. It embraces the second largest dam in the world, a tunnel one and one fourth miles through the mountain, and many miles of distributing channels. It will irrigate at least 150,000 acres for rice cultivation and will feed 400,000 people. I live in the heart of the region thus fertilized and refreshed, and know the joy of the residents who also stand astonished before the magic power of these white people who do for them what, they say, even their gods failed to accomplish." These are great services, but there are greater. Cary and Duff and Morrison and Livingstone have done greater service in shaping the minds and character and destiny of great peoples.

The business of life is to serve God and men, to render personal service, to give personal sympathy, to be kind and generous and unselfish, to control ourselves and to help others to control themselves; to be faithful and duty doing wherever we are and at any cost, to set God first in our lives and to get for him the first place in other lives. Our material task is the shell. The motives and purposes and spirit of the soul within are the life. William Carey saw this. He cobbled shoes to pay expenses. His life was not clobbering. It was the love and service and propagation of the truth of God.

Show that the eternal life is the life of love.

What hinders us from living for eternity?

How does chastisement turn our eyes beyond?

*Y. P. Topics, Jan. 10, 1909. Heb. 7: 15; Matt. 16: 24-37.