

Hopes and Promises For the Future.

If we possessed a limited but unknown amount of money, it would make us somewhat concerned to think at the end of the year that it was three hundred and sixty-five dollars or pounds less than it was at the beginning, and that year by year it would decrease further and further, till it should come down to a single dollar, and then—to nothing. It would be no comfort to think that by no conceivable process could we ever add to our store, it must be subtraction all along. Or, to put the supposition a little differently, suppose we had two funds on investment, and that every year so much was transferred from one to the other, it would be a serious question, on which careful men would think very earnestly whether the transference made one richer or poorer. For the new investment might be a losing one of those miserable concerns in which you have to pay up fresh sums from time to time of indefinite amount; you not only put your money into a bag with holes, but into a bag that has a way of sucking in more and more, only to pass through the holes. Surely you would be all eagerness to be done with such a concern! Never again, if you could help it, would you be in such a predicament! With investments of that kind you would be done forever!

In more than one sense, time is money. At the end of this year when we reckon up our property in time, it will be less by 365 days than it was a year ago. And year by year, if we live for years, it will be further diminished to the like extent. Nor can there ever be the smallest increase. And then, there will come a time when our stock will be reduced to a single day! And that day too will pass away. And then?

But time is not lost to all. He that uses it well transfers it to a better investment, where it will be represented by ever-increasing assets. He that uses it ill transfers it to a losing investment, where every item will bring fresh liability and loss, and instead of increasing assets there will be increasing destitution, misery and despair.

Are we using this changing investment to any good purpose? Have we used the year past to any good purpose? The question may be answered by asking, What is the judgment on our past year that will be passed by our own consciences, by our neighbors, and by our God?

1. By our own consciences. "The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Have we any reason to think that at the end of this year our path will be in any degree brighter than at the end of last? Have we been paying more heed to the great purpose of life? Has any besetting sin been conquered or weakened? Are we more like Christ in anything? Are we less selfish? Tried (let us say) by the Ten Commandments, of the Beatitudes, or the twelfth chapters of Romans, or the thirteenth of I Corinthians, has there been any improvement? Might it be said of us, as of the Thessalonians, that our faith groweth exceedingly and our charity aboundeth?

2. By our neighbors. Have they had more cause to thank God on our behalf? What have we done to brighten their lives? Have we been more amiable in

our homes, more serene and sweet in our temper, more patient, forbearing and forgiving? Have we had more of the mind "at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathize?" If we profess religion, have we done more to commend religion? Have we shown more of the loving spirit of Christ, so as to draw our neighbors to him and to the fellowship of his followers? Have we contributed more to make the Church like Bunyan's House Beautiful, with the pure and kindly maidens who contributed so much to the pilgrim's comfort?

3. By our God. Has he found us more attentive to his will, more careful not to grieve his Spirit, more watchful against sin, more thankful for the exceeding riches of his grace in Christ? As his creatures are we more submissive? As his redeemed creatures more grateful? As his subjects, more loyal? As his children more loving, obedient and helpful? As his servants more faithful? Are we more thankful for present mercies and present discipline, and more exuberant at the thought of our coming inheritance? Do we trust him more, praise him more, pray to him more? Have we more of the spirit of wonder, and do we often say, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called the children of God!"

The flight of time, the rapid passing of youth into maturity, the maturity into old age, has often been the theme for gloomy moralizing. Why should it be so, if on the one hand we are ever borne "a day's march nearer home," and on the other are constantly increasing our best treasures by becoming more "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in rest?"—St. Louis Observer.

Undisturbed Faith.

The man whose mind grasps vast things and whose faith rests firmly on God's Word is not disturbed by every new guess or assumptious theory of pretended scientific investigators. One who knows that true science and the teachings of the Bible are in perfect accord, will be able to say a hearty "amen" to the following from the pen of one whose belief is fashioned by his faith. "I can accord to the scientist nearly all he can claim without in the slightest degree affecting the foundations of my faith. Does he tell me this universe was created millions of years ago? I do not deny it, for my Bible tells me it 'was in the beginning,' which may have been long before the millions of ages which he claims. Does he tell me that the laws which are in operation to-day have been in operation for millions of years? I admit; and only add, that the great Law-giver existed before these laws. Does he tell me of the boundlessness of space, of the infinitude of worlds? I rejoice the more, for all are the work of my Father's hand. Does he tell me that the laws of evolution show a development from the less to the greater? I accept all that; for under the Gospel, from a sinner I became a saint, and from a saint I shall be exalted above the angels and shall sit down with the Saviour on his throne. I believe in the survival of the fittest for the Christian shall survive 'the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds.' Does he tell me

that this evolution dispenses with the Creator? I say not so. There are many things which are claimed in evolution, to which I must give the verdict of the Scotch jury, 'Not proven.' Yet, were I to admit them all, they would not effect my faith in the wisdom and skill and power of the great Father."

"My Times are in Thy Hands."

I saw a beautiful child held high in the hand of her tall, strong father. It seemed so perilous I trembled lest the little one should fall. "Who's got you?" asked her father. "Without a shade of fear, with a merry laugh of delight, the baby said 'Papa!'" So safe, so sure, so happy, even in a place of apparent danger, because her father held her there! Oh, for the simple faith of a child! In theory we do believe God holds us in his hand, and that our ways are directed by him; but how often in our real life do we doubt it, especially in hours of greatest need. My times are in thy hand." What a pillow for your weary head, my friend is this! Your head tired with regrets, disappointments, failures, mistakes, of the days gone by; weary with plans, and, perhaps forebodings for the future, what a resting place for you is here! Think of that past which you so wish might have been different; what will you do with it? You can not alter anything now; what is written, is written. But if you carry it with you into the new year it will weigh down so heavily that you will make you sorry progress. The only disposal of it is to leave it in the hand that controls all the forces of the universe, material and spiritual. The hand which fashioned many beautiful worlds out of nothing can make something beautiful out of mistakes and failures if he chooses; and he will choose to do it if it is best for you. It is safe to leave it all with him and go unburdened into the opportunities of the future. "The heavens and the earth shall shake, but the Lord will be the hope (or the place of repair, or harbor) of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel." Broken and disabled, we can put in here for repairs, and then set sail out upon the unknown sea courageously.

The future with its questionings, what can we do about it? Jesus said if we can not do the thing which is least, why should we be carefully anxious about greater things concerning our well-being, as if we had the whole matter in our own hands?

"God holds the key of the unknown, and I am glad." My times, my circumstances, my opportunities, my training, my discipline, the answer to my prayers, all that concerns me, are in his hand.

When David said, long ago, "My times are in Thy hand," he was full of trouble. His was a human heart, just like our own. He was a sinful man, a repentant man, a forgiven man, a trusting man. His faith was not perfect, for he said in his haste, "I am cut off from before thine eyes." He thought sometimes that God had forgotten him. But even when his faith was small God heard the voice of his supplication when he cried unto him. He is the Lord he changes not. He will hear us also. Even though we have not honored him with that unvarying faith which is his due we may confidently say, "Thou art my God. My times are in thy hand."