

but with joy and gratitude, from that future day (God knows how far in front of us it lies), that day of death which shall be for us the New Year's Day of eternity. Fancy that you have reached that day — fancy that you are lying on your deathbed, and looking back on your past life from your deathbed, and try now to realize what shall be your feelings and desires *then*: then, when we shall know better how perfectly God deserves to be loved, how faithfully and fervently He merits to be served, and how generously He will reward through the endless day of eternity each separate additional moment of this fleeting time that is spent in His service.

In this effort to read the present in the light of the future we may be helped by a little apologue of Jean Paul Richter—the same idea indeed which was developed into a delightful Christmas Tale in our own language and made many laugh and some almost weep some sixty Christmases ago, and often since. (1) The New Year's Night of a Miserable Man (as the German writer calls his phantasy) supposes a certain man, miserable indeed and old, friendless and desolate, to be forced by the epoch of the year which has suggested to us a similar train of thought to look back on the life which he felt was for him coming to an end. He looks back, and he sees nothing there but a dreary blank and worse than a blank: folly and sin and crime—opportunities lost, graces abused, inspirations stifled, the promise of youth blighted—all lost utterly and for ever. And he cries out in the bitterness of his soul: "Oh that I could live my life over again! Oh, that my youth could return!"

And lo! his youth returned. He was young again. His life was still before him. It was all a dream of what might have been, of what might still be, if he did not now at once shake off his sloth and curb his passions and live for God and eternity. Let us also dream this dream and awake from it to a like resolve.



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(1) Charles Dickens's "Christmas Carol," the first and far the best of his four Christmas books. It has just been translated into Irish by the Rev. Patrick Dinneen.