

provisions of God's providence in working out the sanctification of our souls. This secret adds a terrible emphasis to the often-repeated warning of our Redeemer, Who will be our Judge : " Be ye always ready—watch and pray, for you know not the day nor the hour."

On new Year's Day we look back, and then look forward. We are like travellers climbing a mountain, who must at certain stages pause to take breath. Now, the first use the climbers are sure to make of such breathing spaces is to turn their faces away from the heights above them and to gaze down at the place from which they started, the road by which they have come. Something like this we, too, have done in bringing the old year to a close ; but such a retrospect, such a glancing backward, is chiefly useful as an incentive to make us form the resolution that St. Paul had formed before he said : " Forgetting the things that are behind, I stretch myself forward to the things that are before me." We, also, must now again face resolutely the heights above us, and with renewed courage and energy, we must continue the toilsome ascent.

For many of us, however, the remainder of life's journey can hardly be called an ascent. We not only speak of life as an uphill journey, but we speak of those who have reached a certain stage of that journey as going down the hill. Life is not a journey from sea-beach to mountain-top, but rather from shore to shore, across the steep and rugged and perilous isthmus which separates two oceans—the ocean of nothingness from which we have come, and the ocean of eternity towards which we are hastening, however reluctantly ; hastening, not by voluntary effort of our own, but by the very gravitation of our mortality. Every step brings us nearer to the margin of that dark mysterious sea, which all must cross over, never to return. The waves of that ocean dashing on the rock below—we may hear them more and more clearly at every step.

Yes ; at every step. For here it is not as with those mountain-climbers we spoke of a moment ago. For us there is no pause. Whether we rest or toil, sleeping or waking, life goes on. The very moment in which we are speaking, even before we have finished the sentence,