

cannot help being filled with solemnity and awe. God has been very good to us ; but, we ourselves—what have we been ?

When the joy-bells told of the birth of 1897, we said to ourselves that we would make that year a year of progress ; that we would begin a new life ; that we would be better men and women, better fathers and mothers, better sons and daughters, better masters and servants, better citizens, better Christians ; that we would strive more earnestly than we ever had done before towards the great aim and end of life—the glory of God and the good of our fellows.

Now that the year 1897 has passed away, and we look back over all that we said and did in it, what do we find ? Have our good resolutions materialized ? Has the man tendency of our lives been onwards ; or, have we been going backward in the spiritual life ? Have we been trying to "seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness ;" or, have we allowed our lives to drift with the current of the world's stream ?

We must all feel that there have been many shortcomings, many failures, many backward steps ; but, it is a great comfort, if we can point to even one thing in which we have made a distinct advance ; if we can think of one besetting sin which, by Divine grace, we have been able to overcome—if we can reckon up one virtue which we have been able in some measure to cultivate.

On the last night of the Old Year, such thoughts must press upon every thinking man ; and, it behoves us to give them our earnest consideration.

But now turn from the retrospective to the prospective—from 1897 to 1898. What do we see ?

While all behind us is clear as noonday, all in front of us is hid in clouds :

What the New Year will bring to us, to the Church, and to the world, we know not—the hand of infinite love and mercy has cast a veil over the face of the future. Of one thing, however, we are sure. God Himself will be with us whatever our trials, and this God is our God for ever and ever ; He will be our Guide unto death." Once let us realize this and we have a solution for every difficulty. If joy comes to us, we shall not then murmur or complain ; but, recognizing the companionship of God, we shall say with Eli of old, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth to Him." His goodness and His compassion spreads its nets in our path, we shall then stand firm, and refuse to yield to it, because we shall realize that we have One going along with us who will bear us up when our weak human nature feels ready to fail. When the work of the Church seems to be making little progress, and we are inclined to be fainthearted and despondent, we will not give it up, but

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Blessed Master's own words, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

Let us, then, each one of us, renew our last year's good resolutions, and make due and regular use of all the means of grace, afforded us in the Church, to help us to carry out our resolutions. Let us be more regular and systematic in our study of God's Holy Word ; let our devotions, both public and private, be more real, more earnest, more incessant, than ever before ; and, above all, let us come to God's Holy Table more frequently, more reverently, and after better preparation, than in the past. Let us try, in our every-day lives, to think more of others, and less of our selves ; let us be more ready to bear with the weaknesses and infirmities of others, and more charitable in our judgment of them ; let us seek, in all that we do, to advance our neighbor's welfare, temporal and spiritual ; let us, in fact, obey St. Paul's injunctions to the Church at Rome : "Abhor that which is evil ; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love ; in honor preferring one another ; not slothful in business ; fervent in spirit ; serving the Lord ; rejoicing in hope ; patient in tribulation ; continuing instant in prayer ; distributing to the necessity of saints ; given to hospitality."

The great Apostle of the Gentiles was a very human man, he knew how hard it was to live the life of the Crucified, and, when he wrote these words to the Romans, he gave advice which he knew to be suitable for them and for all men. His words are living words, applicable to each one of us.

"But it is, indeed,  
To spend ourselves upon the general good ;  
And, oft misunderstood,  
To strive to lift the knees and limbs that bleed.  
This is the best, the fullest meed,  
Let ignorance assail or hatred sneer,  
Who loves his race he shall not fear ;  
He suffers not for long,  
Who doth his soul possess in loving, and grows strong."

**EPIPHANY.**

Epiphany-tide, which begins on January 6th, is the earliest of those which may now be called the Christmas Festivals. The first historical notice of it is found in St. Clement of Alexandria, about A. D. 200. In the time of St. John Chrysostom, about A. D. 400, it is spoken of as an old and leading festival of the Asiatic Church. The earliest distinct trace of it in the west is found in France, about the middle of the 4th century.

The design of the Festival is to show our gratitude to God for admitting the Gentiles to those religious privileges which had been confined to the Jews.

The word Epiphany means "Manifestation ;" and, in the services of our Prayer Book there are three manifestations of our Blessed Lord commemorated at this time. The first is the declaration of the birth of Christ to the wise men of the East ; the second, the manifestation of the ever-blessed Trinity at the baptism of Christ ; and the third, the