

Vol. 70.

Jan. 3, 1900

No. 1

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BLOOMINGTON, Ind.

THE PRESBYTERIAN.

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E. L.
• PHILADELPHIA •
• NEW YORK •

THE PRESBYTERIAN

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Philadelphia, January 3, 1900

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The New Year.

The old year is gone, and the new one is opening to us, with all its hopes and possibilities. We can only look on the past with mingled feelings of gratitude and regret; gratitude for mercies and privileges, and regret for mistakes and opportunities misimproved. As we look backward we see how homes were darkened by sorrow, and unexpected changes were brought about, and the great work of life went on with its self-denial and burden-bearing. We can see, also, what a glorious thing it is to live on earth, to partake of the joys of friendship and of doing good and serving God. "The living, the living, they shall praise Thee." But we cannot stand looking backward. Our faces are turned to the future, and we press toward it. Through the days and years that are yet before us, we will journey on, till we come to our last year, and then pass from earth to another state of existence.

We try in vain to read the future, but are baffled at every attempt. The unexpected comes forward. Before this year is over, things we do not dream of now may come to pass. No science, nor inventive skill can aid us in reading the mysteries that lie concealed in any of the days to come. We have lamps to guide us, the sure word of prophecy, the experience we have gained and the counsel of others; but these only show us one step at a time, and do not reveal certainly what lies behind the veil of futurity. What, then, shall this year bring to any of us? Shall any have deeper sorrows, sharper trials, heavier burdens, than they have known? Shall there be increased strength, enlarged abilities, greater fields of usefulness? We are now on a new and untried pathway; we "have not come this way heretofore." How shall we walk in it?

We must walk with unfaltering faith. If the way before us is so dark, we cannot walk by sight. But there is One to whom the darkness and the light are both alike. By faith we can take his hand and he will lead us. It may be over rough ways and in dark valleys and by strange paths, but his hand can lead his children, and safely lead them. We need to trust him every step we take. "He can lead the blind by a way they know not." "Commit thy way unto the Lord and he will bring it to pass."

We should go forward keeping our vows. This is a time for good resolutions. Some of them are loudly proclaimed, and some of them secretly uttered, only to the all-hearing ear. Let resolutions be wisely made. It is better not to vow, than to vow and not perform. Religion will be dishonored all through this year, by some who do not keep their New Year promises. The promises are well enough, and we thus set a mark before us, for higher attainments, but after they are made, must come prayer and energy and carefulness to secure their fulfilment. Some people pride themselves in the assertion that they are as good as their word. Let the passing year be a witness, that resolutions sacredly made are faithfully kept and that everyone is as good as his word.

As the year rolls on, we must be on the alert to do good. New opportunities will come to us and new fields of usefulness will open up before us. Whatever the ser-

vice we can render in heaven, there is work to do on earth that cannot be done in heaven. It was said by one, when asked why he was so careful in his dealings with others and in his treatment of them, "I expect to pass through this world but once. If, therefore, there be any kindness I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now. Let me not defer, nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again." So with this year 1900. We have not passed over it before, nor will we ever again. If there is any good we can do in it for God or man, let it be done quickly, for we shall not pass this way again. As these fleeting days pass, we must use them quickly, or they will be gone, with all the precious opportunities they bear.

Is this our last year on earth? This is not suggested to sadden any heart, but in the secret records that are not open to our eyes, it may be written, "This year thou shalt die." The possibility is enough to stir our zeal and increase all our activities. "The night cometh, when no man can work." How well it will be, if there has been no loitering nor neglect of anything, while the day lasts. If there is work in the church or community, that rests on us, let it not be neglected nor cast on others. It will soon enough fall on other shoulders. When Wesley was asked how he would spend the next day, if it were his last on earth, he gave the outline of a busy day, from early morning till late in the evening, and said then he would commit himself to God and fall asleep and awake in glory. So let this year be spent, as if it were our last, filled up with labor and prayer and self-sacrificing devotion to Christ.

Whether this shall be our last year or not, it is possible to make it the best we ever spent. Everything is propitious; the promises brighter than ever, grace in fuller measure, our hearts more sanctified and heaven nearer than ever before.

Our kindest greetings go forth to every reader in the opening of this New Year, and our fervent desire for ourselves is that we may serve God and our generation, by bringing a blessing to every home into which "The Presbyterian" enters.

Shiftings of the New Theology.

"The new theology" hardly feels sure of its ground. On one point its supporters are agreed, and that is, to pick as many flaws as possible in "the old theology," and to cry up something better, if possible, in its stead. With this as a starting point, they are flooding newspaper, magazine, rostrum and pulpit with a literature which calls for theological recasting, or for the formulation of truths more popular to the natural man, and more in harmony with modern taste and an easy-going age. The hard, robust, character-forming and principle-developing doctrines of revealed Christianity are set aside, more palatable and pleasing teachings substituted. Science is called into play and Rationalism summoned to the front, and as the result, God and the Bible are given a new relation to man, and stress is laid upon what are called more loving and comprehensive religious ideas and inculcations. But as one traces their outgivings from time to time, he notes

parenthetically, that he was nothing of a theologian; and then, having put himself right with his hearers, he proceeded to tease his theme and to murder sound thought in a most popularly cruel fashion. Has the reader never observed that it is often such popular preachers as are most forward in modestly disclaiming any attainments as theologians, who are also very forward in preaching upon distinctively theological themes and in dogmatizing most fearlessly upon the very subjects concerning which with profound and indisputable credulity, they have so plainly declared their unsophisticatedness?

There is a humility that is proud of its meekness; there is a charity that is cruel to those who shamelessly lack the gentle graces with which it has been crowned, and there is a kind of theological modesty which delights to announce itself at the first and then to proceed, forthwith, to oust all homesteaders without the formality of any credentials.

If Horace Bushnell had been somewhat more of a technical theologian, he might have been a truer one. He lived ahead of his time; he was a good deal of a Ritschlian before Ritschl. He was more of a mystic than of a rationalist; he was more of a poet than of a philosopher; yes, he was more of a preacher than of a theologian.

The technique of the theologian is not the technique of the pulpit. One contemplates logical and systematic form; the other popular and persuasive presentation. The substance is the same, only the form is different. There may be psychological reasons why the man who habitually affects the one is correspondingly disqualified for the other, but that pre-eminence in either involves the impossibility of high attainment in the other is disproved by the lives of some of the most illustrious men, dead and living, in all the history of the Christian Church.

A Model Church Member.

By Rev. Dr. R. M. Patterson.

Let me describe one from real life. I picture a living woman. She is a member of a rural church. On Sabbath morning, in addition to discharging all other necessary household duties, she prepares five of her children for the Sabbath-school and church: In the school she leads the singing; also, in case of the absence of the organist, playing the melodeon. Then she has a class of a dozen girls. From the school she passes into the church and the choir, the children also remaining, and, with the father, occupying the family pew. Inclement Sabbaths do not keep them at home, when many, living very near the church, will not venture out of their houses, they, though living four miles off, are in their places. The husband, a ruling elder, and the assistant superintendent of the school, has also a class of boys. The two take some part of the Sabbath at home to study together the lesson for the next Sabbath; and they are found at the second service and the prayer meeting.

This wife and mother is also an active member of the Ladies' Missionary Society of the church. Her husband is a director of a bank three miles further from their home than the church is. On the afternoon on which the Society meets in the chapel at three o'clock, the bank directors meet at two. The husband and wife leave home together; she drops from the phaeton at the church and spends the hour which intervenes before the missionary meeting in reading or some useful work; and at the close

of the meeting he calls for her on his return from the bank. There is further a mission Band of little ones with which she meets on another afternoon, and helps and guides. To encourage the young she actively co-operates with a Young People's Association. And everything else that is proposed for the benefit of the church she heartily enters into. Her pastor can always rely upon her as a loyal supporter.

I repeat, this is strictly a picture from real life—of old fashioned religion in the family and the family in the church. But in our churches are multitudes of members who are not in the Sabbath-school; who are not regular and punctual at the Sabbath morning church service, because sleeping late and complaining of being tired after the week's work and dissipation; who neglect the second service and the prayer meeting; who engage in no mission work; who are not active in anything about the church; and yet whose position and circumstances would make it easier for them to attend to all these duties than it is for the beloved Christian whom I have portrayed. Where the spirit is willing, difficulties and obstacles disappear.

When the eye of this Christian woman falls upon this article, her innate modesty will prompt regret that I should thus have portrayed her. But Paul wrote: "I praise you;" and praise should not be postponed until after death. And the picture may incite to faithfulness some who have hitherto been useless in the vineyard of the Lord. My object is not merely to laud one, but to stimulate many.

In an interesting article on the free circulating libraries of New York, the "Evening Post" gives these facts about books and readers: At all these places it has been found that the best works of the standard authors are in constant use, and a greater proportion of works other than fiction is called for in these neighborhoods than in those occupied by people with larger means. Strange as it may seem, there is very little call for German books here, in spite of the great German population. When the Germans get to this country they seem to lose interest in their language. Some of them even appear to be ashamed of it, particularly the newcomers. When foreign books are called for it happens frequently that the works desired are not by foreign authors, but are translations of American or English works. The circulating library of the University Settlement is in the stronghold of Russian and Polish Hebrews. These people, although many of them are wretchedly poor, are very intelligent and eager to learn wherever a chance is offered. "They are remarkable readers—particularly the children," said one of the persons in charge of the library at this point. "While not more than 10 per cent. of the older people can read English, fully 75 per cent. of the young folks can, so you see our work is mainly in the interest of the latter class. The girls read Sophie May and Susan Coolidge, calling for Charles Reade, Miss Mulock, Miss Alcott, and Marion Crawford as they get older. The latter author is popular with the boys, too, but as a rule they choose works of history or biography. In reading fiction they look for stories of adventure and of city life. The boys like the Henty books and they love Trowbridge. When they think they ought to take up something a little further on they begin on Sir Walter Scott. In the boys about fourteen years old one noticeable trait is their desire for humor. Mark Twain and other humorous writers are sought for in a way that is surprising." To the public schools is ascribed most of the credit for the interest which the children take in reading. The schools encourage and to a certain extent require, the use of books from the circulating libraries in connection with the school work, while the effort to interest the pupils in the nation and its history seems to be meeting with much success.

As to the McGiffert Matter.

By Rev. Charles W. Nevin.

The Presbytery of New York has given its deliverance in regard to the McGiffert matter. It is difficult to see how it can be regarded with satisfaction by any worker in the Church. The report adopted, as most attempts at compromise where vital matters are involved, is weak and would be a serious obstacle to progress by the Church should the General Assembly accept it as a final settlement.

It would be very difficult to maintain the logic or strength of a position which, while it condemns the teachings of Professor McGiffert as "erroneous and not in harmony with the facts of Holy Scripture as interpreted by the Presbyterian Church," yet permits him to proclaim these teachings for Presbyterian instruction under a license from the Presbyterian Church.

Peace cannot be purchased in that way. Such attempts to keep the ecclesiastical surface smooth at any price are but planting seed for disruption instead of differences in the future.

Thinking people have been brought to a state of mind where they want the Church to indicate definitely, by its statements, legislation and influence, what it does believe; whether anything in recent scholarship has changed its faith in its Saviour, its Bible, its Christian institutions. Hesitation, evidence of doubt, or timidity just now, must result in serious loss ecclesiastically. There has been a decade of tremendous assertion on one side, and of but faint denial on the other, and a large portion of the world is coming to the belief that the faint denial is the best the Church can do.

Men of general ability, but of no particular biblical scholarship, are misled by the vigor of the attack and the weakness of the reply, and are casting their influence accordingly. They assume that a battle has been fought and won, and so unequivocally proclaim abroad. Their influence is going with the more vigorous party. Mr. John Morley, in his current history of Oliver Cromwell for instance, is a case in point. In supercilious tones he waves out of debate altogether the idea of the inspiration of the Scriptures. Many are swayed by such things. Logic and learning convince the educated and thoughtful, but loudness and lungs carry their way mighty hosts now as ever.

The way, not only to stir up dissension, but to progress toward more serious things, is to tolerate such views as Professor McGiffert champions, with no other reprimand than that administered to him by the New York Presbytery.

The Presbyterian Church believes in the deity of Jesus Christ, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments do not teach error, that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was instituted by the Master himself, and has characteristics possessed by no human institution, and that the Gospels are not misrepresentations. Should any influence in the Church secure the toleration by it, directly or indirectly, of contrary views, nothing could prevent the outburst of indignant protest that would follow.

There is more danger to peace at present from an aroused conservatism than from offended interpreters of the Bible. We must meet these matters, just as the Church in all ages has had to meet them, with gracious firmness and a maintenance of the Presbyterian lines. Intelligent people understand that the Presbyterian Church

has not suppressed scholarship, but has done the large part of the scholarly work for the English-speaking religious world, and is still doing it. It distinguishes sharply however, between facts and deductions from these facts. It believes that the Church catholic is more competent to draw correct conclusions from facts than individuals are. It is always open to conviction, but it is criminal, in the eyes of God and man, to tolerate statements by those whom it sends out to preach, which it believes to be untrue or liable to mislead anyone in the matter of salvation from sin.

Professor McGiffert's book is not new in its conclusions, but by its assertiveness it has brought familiar questions before people at large, and people at large are relying on the Church to answer for them in matters in which they are not skilled.

It is no time to be silent or wavering now, but to speak so that others may be guided safely. If there is more danger to ecclesiastical peace from affronting those who differ radically from the supporters of Professor McGiffert in their conclusions than from checking those who are with him, then this sacrifice of duty in the hope of peace is a move that puts peace in great jeopardy.

Toleration of such teaching from the pulpit would be a betrayal of trust of those who have come into the Church under the assurance of the enjoyment of a certain polity and a certain standard of doctrine.

This decision in New York will encourage theorists, but will be regretted by those who are laboring earnestly to keep the Church from attempting to build on unproven hypotheses. It is hard to see who will be satisfied with it. Those who are behind Professor McGiffert will certainly keep striving to get a better footing, while those who believe the hypothetical method of arriving at conclusions to be vitally defective, will work just as hard to protect the pulpit of our Church from it.

A clear statement of the Church's position in regard to old truth, and its conditions of acceptance of new truth as such, may be discovered; a positive assurance that it proposes to check in all instances every presentation of unproven theories or individual views as the bread of life from its pulpits, will do more to secure peace, progress and confidence than any half-way measures it would be possible to promulgate.

The questions that we are deciding, let us not forget, are of momentous importance. Their results will be very far-reaching. Until we show ourselves sure of the foundation we ourselves stand on, inviting others to share it with us, may well provoke ironical questioning. If we are going to continue to have an effective Church in our generation, we must have one that stands for something so vital that we are ready to defend it at any cost. The economy of mankind has no place for any other kind of a Church. Lowering standards and widening doors is not a wise or successful way of organizing any kingdom.

The Meeting of Moody and Sankey.

"I consider Dwight L. Moody to be the most remarkable man of the century," says Mr. Ira D. Sankey in "Success," "distinguished especially for his devotion to the cause of Jesus Christ, and the betterment of the world. His character is marked by great common sense, and by the utmost sincerity; his heart by singleness of philanthropic purpose, and his life by the tremendous power of achievement. His work has resulted in the conversion of