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RETROSPECTIVE AND PROSPECTIVE.

At the threshold of each new year it seems but natural to look about us--backward at the year just gone, and forward to the year drawing on--reviewing our conflicts and God's mercies past and, with hope as our telescope, prospecting the future.

From your letters and otherwise, dear readers, fellow-servants of our King and fellow-heirs of his glory, we know something of the trials temporal and spiritual which have bestrown your paths; but we know much more of how the grace of God has blessed you all spiritually through Christ. And we earnestly trust that, with us of the TOWER Office, you can apply to yourselves the words of the poet--

"Looking back, I praise the way
God has led me, led me day by day."

Our day is peculiar in many respects. Not only is it a day of blessings, advantages and conveniences beyond any other, but it is a day of dissatisfaction and discontent beyond any other. Not only is it a day of greater light and understanding respecting the Lord's plan, but it is a day in which the great Enemy of the truth is permitted to spread before the awakening nominal and real Church more sophistical delusions in the name of "new light" than ever before. Not only is it true that a man or woman has five times the opportunity for usefulness in God's service, ever before enjoyed, but it is also true that business, worldly pleasure and ambition are five times as active and powerful to keep us back from this possible usefulness. It behooves us, therefore, not only to get awake to our present privileges, blessings and opportunities, but to keep awake to them. He who does not realize that this will require a constant battle with selfishness, within and without--with the World, the Flesh and the Devil--is very liable to fall into the snare in learning of it.

Nevertheless it is possible, even now, for the intelligent Christian to have absolute contentment, to escape the errors of our day and to keep himself actively in the love and service of God. This blessing, with the peace that passeth all understanding, is, however, only for the few: for those whose faith is resting in the perfect work of Christ--in the ransom which he gave--and who are fully consecrated, heart and body, to the Master's will and work and way in every matter. Such he does not leave in darkness and doubt in this day when the hearts of the worldly-wise are "failing them for fear and for looking after those things coming upon the earth," but to them are fulfilled the promises -- "He will show you things to come;" "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"--free from the bondage of error, free from the bondage of fear, and from those other bondages of creeds of men and of social and religious societies into which fear is driving many under the plea of "Union."

But while we do well, dear friends, to remember gratefully the mercies of the past year and to rejoice in the grace sufficient with which it was so richly supplied, it is wise for us to look carefully to our steps for the year beginning. [R1485 : page 4] While we did not fall last year, some did. Our trials and testings may be more severe during the year beginning, and unless we feel our own insufficiency and look to our Master continually, we shall be liable to depart from humility, to become puffed up with pride and haughtiness, the sure precursors of a fall. And again, if we look merely to our own weaknesses we will become so discouraged as to yield readily to the adversary's assaults. Our only safe position will be to feel humble and to realize our insufficiency, but to trust implicitly and always to him who has promised that he will never leave us, nor forsake us. (If there be any breach between us, if any leaving and forsaking, it will be on our part, not his.)

We can safely trust our all to him who assures us that "All things shall work together for good to them that *love God* (with all their hearts)--to those called according to his purpose." We need have no fear of the ultimate results, so long as we find *our wills* fully submitted to our Master's will, and our hands and thoughts filled with his work. We may have full confidence, and may rest in peace upon the promise, "He will not suffer you to be tempted *above that ye are able*, but will, with the temptation, provide also a way of escape."

"Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist [by standing] steadfast in *the faith*, knowing that similar afflictions are being accomplished in your brethren in the world."--**1 Pet. 5:8.**

The more we realize that we are in the harvest --the winnowing and testing time--the more we should each seek to follow the Apostle's advice, "Make straight paths for your feet lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." Each of us has learned some of his weak or vulnerable points of character, and each should seek, not only to strengthen these weak points but also specially to fortify himself against temptations and besetments of the adversary upon those weakest points, lest he thereby be turned out of the straight and narrow way.

This means a circumspection of your affairs in general: home affairs, business affairs, all, should be ordered and systematized with a view to protect your own weak points to the Lord's praise and to the good of yourself and others. See that your heart is fully given up to the King, and then, with the wisdom which he will supply those who seek it, divide your time and talents among your various duties so as to spend and be spent more to the honor of the Lord and to the service of his truth, and you will find yourself liberally repaid in spiritual favors.

We suggest to all WATCH TOWER readers as a motto and watch-word for 1893 the words of the great Apostle Paul--

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your deeds be done in love."--**1 Cor. 16:13,14**.

THE POLITICAL OUTLOOK.

Dissatisfaction and unrest tell the story of the entire civilized world. The growth of intelligence is making the world more unhappy daily, because selfishness is the basis or principle upon which every fresh degree of enlightenment must be erected; for the world knows not of the other basis, upon which the new nature builds, the basis of Love. Consequently, intelligence makes possible gigantic Trusts, Pools and swindling schemes on the part of many who occupy places of power; and the same intelligence permits those less favorably circumstanced to detect the frauds, to see their own comparative disadvantage so far as a rapid or fraudulent accumulation of wealth is concerned. Hence the gradual unrest. None but real saints of God know what full rest there is in Christ--the result of having the Christ-basis --Love for God and men--substituted for selfishness.

We clip the following on this subject from a *New York Tribune* editorial, and call special attention to its closing sentence:--

"And yet how far from realization is this noble idea of peace to-day. That Europe is an armed camp is a hackneyed truism. England holds millions of Oriental peoples under her sway, not by the bond of brotherhood, but by the iron hand of force. France is rent into factions by a great national scandal, in which many of her honored sons figure as despoilers [**R1486 : page 4**] of the widow and orphan. The tragedy of the

great anti-Semitic persecution is not yet played out in Russia, and in some other European [R1486 : page 5] countries the echoes of its cry of hate are ominously distinct. Nor has the shadow of gaunt famine yet ceased to fall athwart the land of the Muscovite. At the same time, a social unrest unparalleled in history has taken possession of the nations of Europe, and has found a lodgment even in our own land. Its dominant note is a profound dissatisfaction with things as they are, not always rational or intelligent, but based on certain facts which no candid investigator will deny. This unrest is constantly leading to the social insurrection known as anarchy, and to the industrial wars known as lockouts and strikes. It may not be that the present social system is disintegrating; but it is certainly true that it contains within itself movements and elements which are symptomatic of a change in its character. And whether that change shall come by evolution or revolution depends largely on the wisdom and discretion of those who now hold the places of influence and power in the world. These are the facts that confront us this morning as we repeat the angels' song of peace and good will. Does not the situation suggest to us rather those words of the Master, recorded in holy Writ, 'I came not to send peace, but a sword'?

"Nor is the prophetic dream of brotherhood, for which Christmas stands, realized in the churches. The great Roman Catholic Communion in this country is stirred to its depths by controversies that vitally affect its very life and character. Every Protestant denomination is touched with the same unrest that is affecting social life. Old traditions and dogmas are in process of reconstruction, and new views are forcing themselves to the front. As a result of all this, there is strife to-day between those who join in singing the praises of the Babe in Bethlehem, and multitudes of good men are arrayed against each other in a deadly conflict of opinion."

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After the conflict will come rest, and after the battle will come peace. Happy those who, in this enigmatic age, in spite of so much that is calculated to puzzle and sadden us, have such a clear prevision of the future that they can see the coming triumph of truth over error, of good over evil, in every land and clime."

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