

ADVICE FOR THE NEW YEAR;

OR,

A PASTOR'S OFFERING TO HIS FLOCK :

BEING

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN ST. THOMAS' CHURCH,

M O N T R E A L ,

ON

SUNDAY, THE 4TH JANUARY, 1846,

BY THE

REVEREND CHARLES BANCROFT, A. M.

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TO THE
CONGREGATION OF ST. THOMAS' CHURCH,
THIS SERMON
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED, BY THEIR
PASTOR.

The Profits, if any, arising from the sale of this Discourse, to be appropriated to St. Thomas' Church.

S E R M O N .

“ Thus saith the Lord, set thine house in order : for thou shalt die, and not live.”—ii. *Kings*, xx. 1.

THE selection of such a text, my brethren, in addressing you upon this the first Lord's day in the New Year, may appear strange. You have been accustomed to regard this as the happiest period of the year. Now, your plans are forming—your anticipations of the future are bright and cheering—and, in the happy congratulations incident to the season, you are apt to lose sight of the trials and vexations and disappointments which lie in your way. The gloomy subject of death, with the preparation necessary for it, is not the one which you would choose for your meditations to-day. But this is not the case with all. The bereaved parent, the widow and the fatherless, whose eyes seek in vain the beloved presence of those who

gladdened the opening of the previous year, whose ears have failed to catch the music of their voices, can see the appropriateness of such a choice. Surely your Pastor, who looks around upon nearly a score of families desolated by the ravages of death within a period of but a few months, may address those who survive, nay, every member of his flock, in the spirit of the text—"Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live."

These were the words of God to Hezekiah by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah. The message came at a time when he was lying afflicted with a grievous sickness—"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death."* Highly favoured as was the good Monarch of Israel, like other men, he was subject to disease and death. And although, in answer to prayer, the short term of his existence was prolonged, yet it was but the removing to a little distance the approach of that solemn event which awaits us all, and for which he was enjoined to prepare.

In looking forward through the year just commenced, I see in anticipation many of you,

* ii. Kings, xx. 1.

perhaps myself among the number, cut down by the ruthless hand of the destroying angel. Yes, my dear brethren, judging from the past, some of us will certainly be called hence. When again we begin a New Year, there will be, as now, parents mourning the loss of children, torn from their embrace in the tender age of infancy, the bloom of youth, or the ripeness of manhood. Lonely widows, bereaved husbands, orphan youth will be here, who are, now, enjoying, in happy union, the comforts of domestic life.

But it is not upon this sad reality that I would dwell. I would turn your thoughts to the preparation needed for the change, that if any of you should be called hence, you may have the satisfaction of feeling that you have done everything that could be done for the good of your own souls and the souls of others. May you leave this house of God to-day, feeling that there is a momentous responsibility devolving upon you. You have perhaps entered upon the last year in which you will be allowed to make preparation for eternity. To each of you, in your several relations of parent, hus-

band, wife, child, friend, I might say *your* days may be numbered ; and your present example, counsel and influence, decide the happiness of those dearest to you, throughout eternity.

Well, therefore, may I come to you this morning, as the messenger of God, with the language of the Prophet in my mouth—“ *Set thine house in order.*”

And I design applying these words to the urging upon you : First, the importance of immediate attention to the work of religion in the heart.

Secondly, such an adjustment of your worldly affairs as is the duty of every Christian in the prospect of death.

And Thirdly, that devotion to the religious wants of your families which may render your death-bed peaceful.

I. First: The importance of immediate attention to the work of personal religion. This will appear from the consideration of the worth of the soul. Our Saviour has said, “ what shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? ” *

* Mark, ix. 36.

intimating the value of one soul to be greater than that of the whole world. The world shall be burned up and all that it contains, however attractive its objects may now appear. The corruptible body of man, decked out at such an expense of time and means, shall soon become food for the worms, or else turn to the dust of which it was formed. Not so the deathless principle within ; the soul shall live on forever. The union, too, of the body and the soul, has, in the wise Providence of God, been made the term of probation for man, and his conduct here is to decide the destiny of his immortal part. Endowed with the capacity of enjoying exquisite happiness or of enduring unutterable misery, either the one or the other will become the lot of the soul after death. This season of probation is, at best, but short. How few attain to the *age of man*, in itself nothing when compared with eternity.

“ The year rolls round, and steals away
 The breath that first it gave ;
 Whate’er we do, where’er we be,
 We’re travelling to the grave.
 “ Dangers stand thick through all the ground,
 To push us to the tomb :
 And fierce diseases wait around,
 To hurry mortals home.”

Yet, short as is the term of probation, it is our *only* one. There is no preparation beyond the grave. No efforts can then be made, no prayers offered, for the relief of the soul. You may be permitted to remain a few years longer upon earth, or it may be for only a few days or hours,—none but God can tell; yet remember that though it be but *one hour*, it is the only season allotted you in which to make ready for Eternity. I urge you, therefore, to seek, without delay, this preparation.

1. *Strive to realize your lost condition by nature and actual transgression.* Take the holy Scriptures for your guide, and you will see that by the fall of our first parents all were made sinners, so that you have been “conceived and born in sin.”* To this evil nature, thus inherited, you have added many actual transgressions of the holy Law of God. This you have to-day confessed in appropriate language appointed by the Church—“We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep, and there is no health in us.” Follow the teaching of the same blessed oracles, and you will

* Psalms, li. 5.

acknowledge any one of these sins which you have committed to be sufficient to banish you everlastingly from the presence of God, inasmuch as it is written—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do them,"* and, "Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in *one* point, he is guilty of all."† How hopeless, therefore, without a Saviour, is your condition. The broken law is demanding the penalty ; you have nothing to give. It would be satisfied with a perfect obedience to all its requirements ; but that you cannot yield. No faithfulness now can atone for past neglect. Neither can the word of the Almighty, without some sufficient atonement, be recalled: "The soul that sinneth it shall die."‡ Ponder, my beloved hearers, upon this sad truth of your lost state by nature and actual transgression. Pray that the Holy Ghost may be pleased to show you more and more of the deformity of sin, its guilt and aggravation in the eyes of God ; not that you may be thrown into despair, but that you may realize more sensibly

* Galatians ,iii. 10.

† James, ii. 10.

‡ Ezekiel, xviii. 4.

the impossibility of saving yourselves, and may be driven out of yourselves to the salvation provided in the Gospel. It is the Holy Spirit alone who can give such deep convincing views of our sinful and lost condition. May He, in infinite mercy, grant them to us all, for Christ's sake!

2. *But again, I exhort you to lay hold with the hand of faith, of the salvation wrought out for you by Jesus Christ.* "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance," is the language of St. Paul, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."* Our Saviour, when speaking of his own advent in the flesh, said: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was *lost*."† For the proud Pharisees, who trusted in their own righteousness for salvation, he could do nothing. "They that be whole," was his reply to them, "need not a physician, but they that are *sick*."‡ If, therefore, you possess that deep sense of your sinful and lost condition, of which I have just spoken, if you dare not so much as lift up your eyes to heaven, if you are sincerely penitent for your

* 1 Tim. i. 15.

† Luke, xix. 10.

‡ Matt. ix. 12.

past transgressions, and have, in the strength of God, renounced all the ways of the devil, you may confidently look to Jesus Christ as your Saviour from sin and death. You may see, in “God manifest in the flesh,”* one able and willing to save you. In His obedience and sufferings unto death, you can behold an all-sufficient righteousness and a complete atonement. That work of which you can do no part is accomplished in the person of Christ. You need no other Mediator. It is presumptuous for you to hope, by any works of your own, to add to the efficacy of Christ’s atonement. All, therefore, that you can do is to receive this salvation thus wrought out. Look, then, with the eye of faith to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Look to Jesus! extended upon the Cross on Calvary,—as the dying Israelites did to the brazen serpent,—with the confidence of Peter when he cried out, “Lord, save me;”† or of the believing parent in the Gospel—“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”‡

3 *Once more, I bid you search in your life*

* 1 Tim. iii. 16.

† Mat. xiv. 30.

‡ Mark, ix. 24.

and conduct for those evidences of a saving change of heart, without which the strongest professions of faith in Christ can avail nothing. That faith which justifies the sinner is a faith which worketh by love; whose existence in the soul is manifested by a life of unreserved obedience to the Divine Will. For a man to say that he possesses genuine faith, and yet at the same time to be living in the commission of habitual and wilful sin, plainly involves a contradiction. How can a man love God and yet be daily, yea, hourly, heaping contempt upon His holy name? St. John tells us that “Whosoever is born of God *sinneth not*,”* that is, will not allow himself in the indulgence of any known sin. But he has also said, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”† Therefore, it is clear, that he who possesses the saving faith of which we have spoken, or in the language of the Epistle, “believeth that Jesus is the Christ,” being born of God, will not commit sin.

Again, St. John tells us that a distinctive mark of those who are born of God is, *that*

* 1 John v. 18.

† 1 John v. 1.

*they have overcome the world.** The world, my brethren, is the enemy of God, so pronounced to be in the Holy Scriptures ; yet how many professing Christians cling to it to the destruction of their souls. How many in this congregation, who are undecided on the subject of religion, would, if called to the Bar of Judgment this night, have to confess, that the whole cause of their indecision, lies in an unwillingness to abandon the sinful schemes and pleasures of the world. [I might enumerate some of these sinful schemes and pleasures, such as The Theatre, The Race Ground, The Gambling Table, The Ball Room, The Lottery, were I not fearful of misconstruction ; lest any should suppose that true Godliness consisted in the abandonment of these alone. There are others equally sinful, some of which might not with propriety be mentioned in this house of God, and before this assembly.]† Were we per-

* 1 John, v. 4.

† The above, in brackets, was delivered extemporaneously. In confirmation of the position taken, I quote the following extracts :

“ THE THEATRE.—Plato tells us, that plays rouse the passions, prevent the use of reason, and are dangerous to morality. Aristotle lays it down as a rule, that the seeing of comedies ought to be forbidden to young people. Tacitus says, the German manners were guarded by having no play houses among them. Ovid in his most licentious poems, speaks of the Theatre as favourable to dissoluteness, and advises its suppression. The whole primitive Church testified assent thereto. Theophilus of Antioch, in the 2nd cen-

mitted to say, on the authority of God, that they might still enjoy these forbidden pleasures, that they could without injury to their souls pursue them, how quickly would the Church

tury says, "It is not lawful." The Roman Catholic Church repeatedly prohibited it. The Protestant Church in Europe and America have given similar testimony. Archbishop Tillotson calls the Theatre, the Devil's Chapel, a nursery of licentiousness and vice; a recreation that ought not to be allowed among a civilized, much less a Christian community."—*Dr. Beecher's Sermon at the opening of the Tremont Theatre, as a House of Divine Worship.*

"The House of Bishops, solicitous for the preservation of the purity of the Church, and the piety of its members, are induced to impress upon the clergy the important duty, with a discreet but earnest zeal, of warning the people of their respective cures, of the danger of an indulgence in those worldly pleasures which may tend to withdraw the affections from spiritual things. And especially on the subject of gaming, of amusements involving cruelty to the brute creation, and of theatrical representations, to which some peculiar circumstances have called their attention,—they do not hesitate to express their unanimous opinion, that these amusements, as well from their licentious tendency, as from the strong temptations to vice which they afford, ought not to be frequented. And the bishops cannot refrain from expressing their deep regret at the information, that in some of our large cities, so little respect is paid to the feelings of the members of the Church, that theatrical representations are fixed for the evenings of her most solemn festivals."—*From the Journal of the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States, 1817.*

"Both to the clergy and to the laity we desire to say, but most pointedly to the former, that the Christian profession exacts a greater abstraction from the world than that which consists in the abstaining from acknowledged sin. There are practices so nearly allied to it, and so easily abused, that we conceive of a professor of religion in duty bound either not to countenance in the least degree; or, as is allowable, in regard to some of the matters contemplated, to avoid the so employing of time, and the so lavishing of affection, as puts into a state of sin, although not necessarily belonging to the subject. We would be far from an endeavour after an abridgment of Christian liberty. But we cannot forget, that in a list of the classes of evil livers, there is introduced the description of persons who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;" nor, in respect to the female professors of religion in particular, the admonition, that "she who liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." We are aware of the difficulty of drawing the line between the use of the world and the abuse of it; that being conceived of by different persons equally pious and virtuous, according to the diversity of natural temperament, and of the states of society in which they have been placed by education or by habit; but we know, that where the conscience can reconcile itself to the drawing as near to the territory of sin, as it can persuade itself to be consistent with the still standing on secure ground, deadness to spiritual good at the best, but more commonly subjection to its opposite is the result."

"In speaking of subjects of the above description, we would not be understood to class among them any practice which is either immoral in itself,

be crowded with applicants for admission into its privileges.

I say not this of all who have not yet made a public profession of religion. I believe that

or so customarily accompanied by immorality, that the one is necessarily countenanced with the other. Of the former description, is gaming in all the variety of its exercise; and the like may be said of whatever involves cruelty to the lower animals of the creation. If the same cannot be affirmed of works of fiction, and of putting speeches into the mouths of feigned characters, for the purpose of instruction or of entertainment; yet, as the question is applicable to the exhibitions of the theatre, such as they have been in every age, and are at present; we do not hesitate to declare, unanimously, our opinion, that it is a foul source of very extensive corruption. We lay little stress on the plea, that it is a matter practicable in social institutions, to purge the subject from the abuses which have been attached to it. When this shall have been accomplished, it will be time to take another ground. But, in truth, we are not persuaded of the possibility of the thing, when we consider that the prominent and most numerous patrons of the stage are always likely to be the least disposed to the seriousness which should enter into whatever is designed to discriminate between innocence and guilt. While the opinions and the passions of such persons shall continue to serve the purpose of a looking-glass, by which the exhibited characters are to be adjusted to the taste of so great a proportion of the public, we despair of seeing the stage rescued from the disgusting effusions of profaneness and obscenity; and much less of that mean of corruption, more insinuating than any other—the exhibiting of what is radically base, in alliance with properties captivating to the imagination.

“While we address this alike to the clergy and to the laity, we consider it as especially hostile to the usefulness of the former. And even in regard to some matters confessed to be innocent in themselves, their innocency may depend much on many circumstances, and professional character among others. The ear of a clergyman should always be open to a call to the most serious duties of his station. Whatever may render it difficult to his own mind to recur to those duties with the solemnity which they require, or may induce an opinion in others, that such a recurrence must be unwelcome to him from some enjoyment not congenial with holy exercise, ought to be declined by him. If it be a sacrifice, the making of it is exacted by what ought to be his ruling wish, the serving of God, and the being useful to his fellow men, in the discharge of the duties of the ministry.”—*Pastoral letter from the House of Bishops to the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States.*—*Berean, August 8, 1844.*

In a circular placed by the late Dr. Bedell in the hands of those who desired to become united with the Church in any of its ordinances, we find among others, the following questions for self-examination; “What is my candid and free opinion as to the nature of what are called the amusements of the world, such as theatres, balls, games, &c.?” “Is it my opinion that I could with any kind of consistency engage in these things?” “Do I love any of these things *now*?” To which the candidate was expected to be able to reply, in substance, if not in words, respectively: “I think them

there are some kept away from other and higher motives, such as an humbling sense of their unworthiness, and a fear lest they should afterwards be betrayed into inconsistencies which might bring reproach upon religion. But why should I, as a Minister of God, deceive any of you into the belief that you may at the same time be the servants of God and the servants of the world? Is it not written in language so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein: "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."* "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the

all *sinful*, inasmuch as they are contrary to the express command, which says, 'Come out and be separate. Deny yourself.' And, I think they tend directly to lead the mind from God." "Most certainly not." "No."

And one more question: "Should I be led astray in relation to these things, what do I think ought to be my own opinion of my spiritual state, and what do I think ought to be the conduct of my pastor toward me?" "I ought to think myself described in that saying of Scripture, 'Thou hast left thy first love,' and that my spiritual state would call for deep repentance, and a speedy return to God, and that my pastor ought to warn, rebuke, pray for and with me, and if all this fail to relieve me, refuse me the privileges I had heretofore so unworthily enjoyed."—See *Memoir of Dr. Bedell* by S. H. Tyng, D. D. p. 172.

See also Milner's Church History, for the opinion of Cyprian; of the Romans; and of the early Christians, concerning the Theatre, vol. 1. p. 205; and Neander's History of the first three centuries, p. 161. On the subject of Gambling, I refer the reader to a Sermon of Dr. Dwight on the 8th Commandment, vol. 4., p. 257. "If Europe," said Montesquieu, "is to be ruined, it will be ruined by gaming."

In a word I would ask,—If all of the above may not be classed under the head of those "Pomps and Vanities of the World," which the Christian binds himself to renounce—where are they to be found?

* Luke, xvi. 13.

lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”* And the still stronger language of St. James: “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”† No, my brethren, I will not thus trifle with your eternal welfare; I will not be accessory to the loss of your souls. It may be the road to popularity, but it is not the way to obtain peace of mind or a clear conscience in the sight of God. I will warn you against a spirit of worldly-mindedness, which, if indulged, must prove ruinous to your eternal prospects. From this you have more to fear at the present day than from the progress of open infidelity or superstition. These have been so often met and so triumphantly refuted, that they may almost be compared to venomous reptiles whose sting has been extracted. Not so the world! it is so insidious in its approaches that even the most wary are made its victims. In opposition to its advances cultivate a spirit of holiness. The two cannot live together. The

* 1 John, ii. 15, 16.

† James, iv. 4.

one will extinguish the other. Let that great change be once thoroughly wrought in your hearts by the Holy Spirit, and your *taste* for these pleasures will be destroyed. You will find, what may now appear a strange anomaly, that you can live without them—nor only so, but that you will enjoy a peace of mind to which you have hitherto been a stranger, and which the world can neither give nor take away.

I have dwelt the longer upon the points contained under this head, because they are such as affect the salvation of every individual soul. Without a deep sense of our lost condition, without a surrender of the soul to Christ and a life of holiness, none can expect to be saved. For all are included in the memorable words of our Saviour: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* In what remains I may be much more brief.

II. I would then exhort you, in the second place, to seek such an adjustment of your business affairs as is the duty of every Christian in the prospect of death. This was also contem-

* John, iii. 3.

plated in the words of the prophet to Hezekiah: "Set thine house in order." Monarch of a Kingdom, it was of the utmost importance that every arrangement should be made by which its peaceful enjoyment might be secured to his successor. Such reasonable attention to temporal things is, in an equal degree, the duty of every Christian. I will venture to say that the majority of those cases of litigated property which have happened after the death of the proprietor, and which have led to much contention and many heart-burnings, might have been avoided by the seasonable observance of this rule. But men, in general, are too apt to delay to a death-bed what should be done in the season of health. With some there appears to be a superstitious fear lest the making of a will should hasten the hour of death. All their businesss affairs perhaps partake of the same neglect, so that if they should be suddenly called into Eternity, much evil would ensue. I have no desire to enter largely into this subject, but I must remind those of you who are professing Christians, in particular, that it is a solemn duty incumbent upon you, to live in view of Eternity ; and,

therefore, that it should be your aim *now* to make such a disposition of your affairs as may bear the inspection of God, and in case you are removed, prove of no injury to your fellow men.

III. I pass on to the third and concluding point which I would urge upon your consideration, as suggested by the text, viz :—That devotion to the religious wants of your families which may render your death-bed peaceful. Many of you have become, in the Providence of God, parents—heads of families. How solemn is the responsibility thus devolved upon you. You are the natural guardians of these children and youth. They look to you for support, for counsel, for sympathy, for that moral and intellectual training which is to fit them for life. But especially are they to depend upon your example and precept in what concerns the salvation of their souls. You occupy a place which none besides can fill. You may delegate your authority, in certain particulars, to others entrusted with their education ; but after all, the responsibility will fall back upon yourselves ; their weal or woe for all eternity will

depend, in a great measure, upon the faithfulness with which you have executed your duty as a parent and friend. This is the point which I would seriously press upon your attention. If you would have your death-bed undisturbed you must now be faithful to your children. Oh, tell me not that you could close your eyes in peace on earthly things, with the consciousness that the children you had left behind, would, in all probability, through your neglect, become reprobates, and that, in consequence, you should never see them more. Under such circumstances, how could you die in peace? As, therefore, life is so uncertain, and this year may not have run half its course before you are called to your account, let me admonish you to be wise in time. Gather these youthful immortals stately around your family altar—let every day be commenced and closed with God. Impress upon them the importance of secret prayer, and the study of the sacred Scriptures. Do what you can to make them love their Bibles. Bring them habitually with you to the sanctuary of God. Make them feel that the soul stands as much in

need of spiritual nourishment as the body does of food. Send them to the Sunday School; the very atmosphere it breathes is healthful to the soul. Talk with them often and seriously about the things which concern their eternal interests. Pray with them, and for them. Let them be taught to love the society of godly people. Let them be trained in enmity to the world. And, in their education, let them be sent to schools, and colleges, and seminaries, where the care of their souls will receive due attention, and where the truth will be taught without any admixture of superstition or error. If, my brethren, you will steadily pursue this course, adding to it the force of a good example, you may safely leave those entrusted to your charge in the hands of God. You may die happy, in the consciousness that you have done what you could for the benefit of their souls, and with faith, that the good seed will eventually spring up and bring forth fruit unto salvation. It is impossible, however, for me to dwell with too much earnestness upon the importance and weight of your good example. In vain will you press upon your children or

dependents, the importance of a strict attention to religious duties, so long as you are negligent yourselves. You may, for a time, compel them to come up habitually to the courts of the Lord, whilst you are careless in your own attendance. But unless the grace of God touch their hearts, it will only be for a time. When removed from the parental authority you will find them preferring your example to your precept. You may teach them that the "friendship of the world is enmity with God," but if they see you plunging with avidity into its dissipations, they will quickly forget your instructions. And so in every other particular; children are keen observers of men and manners, and he who acts on the contrary supposition will quickly find his mistake. Beware of thus trifling with the eternal interests of those committed by God to your charge.

I have applied these remarks to parents; they will reach the case of persons in every relation of life. Every Christian is, strictly speaking, the keeper of his brother's soul. Let them in a more extended sense be received by you all, as pointing out the necessity

of watchfulness and diligence, that neither by your precept nor example you may injure any immortal soul ; but that, when called hence, you may be rendered happy by the conviction that you have done your duty in every station in life in which you have been placed, and in every connexion which you have formed.

To conclude, I can truly say of you all, in the spirit of the Apostle, that my heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved.* "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy."† And in the selection of the subject which I have made to-day, I would not mar the joy with which many of you may have entered upon this New Year. Nay, I would sympathize in your joys, as well as in your sorrows. But I would also remember, that we are now nearer by a year to the period of our death ; and would call upon you and myself to renewed efforts in making our eternal calling and

* Rom. x. 1.

† 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.

election sure. I would seize, too, the opportunity of urging my *impenitent* hearers to an immediate decision on the all-important subject of religion. Can it be that another year has rolled by, and yet so many of you are still procrastinating? Are you on the brink of the grave, and yet without a guide to conduct you through the dark valley? Are you still treating with neglect the offers of that Merciful Saviour, by the might of whose protecting arm *you* are still preserved in existence, while thousands of your fellow creatures have been summoned away beyond the possibility of repentance and faith?

“ Great God ! is this our certain doom ?
And are we still secure ?
Still walking downward to the tomb,
And yet prepare no more ?”

Dear hearers! would you have this be the happiest year of all your lives, let its commencement witness the full and entire surrender of yourselves,—your hearts and lives to the service of Jesus Christ. Do not let this occasion pass, lest the awful sentence go forth, “ Cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground ?”* .

* Luke xiii. 7.

And you, my brethren, who are already on the Lord's side, persevere in the course which you have begun, seek after greater attainments in holiness. Let this year be happier than any that has preceded, by making you more like that Saviour whom to know is life everlasting, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore. But a few more years of sin and sorrow upon earth and the conflict will be over. Then you will be called to lay aside the sword and to receive the crown.

“O, long expected year ! begin :
Dawn on this world of wo and sin ;
Fain would we leave this weary road,
To sleep in death, and rest with God.”

