

THE
CHURCHMAN

JANUARY, 1881.

ART. I.—NEW-YEAR RESOLVES.

THIS morning dawns, the parent of most serious thought. We pass the boundary which separates a year-departed and a New Year commencing. We thus are taught that the sands of life are quickly falling, and that the end of time advances with untiring step. If we look backward, we are met with a train of humiliating evil. If we look onward, the uncertainty of continuance here, and death's tremendous issues, confront us. On each side, then, our eyes rest on solemnities. Surely we are now prompted to adopt plans of amended life, and to resolve that the New Year shall indeed be a year of newness. The field of amendment is most spacious. Weeds show their hateful heads where flowers should bloom. Where shall improved culture find commencement? Selection from abundant matter must be made, and many points of intensest interest and gigantic magnitude must be excluded. We shall be guided to a wise choice by consideration of our present spiritual state.

Let, then, self-scrutiny present a truthful mirror. We are babes, when for the time we should be full-grown men. We are weak and sickly, when we should be strong and vigorous. We grovel in the dust, when we should be soaring on eagles' wings in the highest regions of celestial light. We play with toys, when we should brandish the sword of the Spirit. We appear as dull orbs in the canopy on high, when we should reflect brightly the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Grace seems scarcely in the bud, when it should be as the full-blown flower. Our walk is tottering, and perhaps backsliding, when we should firmly stride as giants in the upward way. Our conduct is ambiguous, when our examples should call to the faith and service of the blessed Jesus. Our ignorance merits the rebuke, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not

known Me?" We rather savour of the world than of Him whose Name is as ointment poured forth.

In forming resolves of amendment, our first inquiry then should be, What is the cause of this immaturity? Children are feeble when food is insufficient or without nutrition. Our souls may be impoverished because we daily gather not the manna from above. We may desert the banqueting-house of heaven, to feed upon the husks and poisonous berries of the world. We may desert the fountain of living waters for leaky cisterns. We may too rarely or too feebly ponder the life-giving, the strength-imparting, the invigorating, the exalting revelations of the Book of Life. We may ignore, or fall short in understanding, our high calling, as the sons of God, the joint-heirs with Christ, the sheep of His pasture, the spouse of His love, the jewels of His mediatorial crown, the temples of the Holy Ghost. We may have received unto life the tidings of salvation through the work and merits of the Lord Jesus. We may believe in all the articles of the Christian faith. Thus we may have been delivered from the powers of darkness, and have been translated into the kingdom of grace. But we may be lingerers at the threshold of the glorious palace of light, when, pressing onward, we should have derived vigour and power and strong consolation from the vast stores within. If such be the cause of stunted growth, the remedy is clear. If we are impoverished because we feed not, it is surely our wisdom on this morning to resolve that we will be dwarfs no more: that we will no longer allow the grand truths of revelation, so largely, richly, profusely and gloriously made, to be so poorly realized: that we will not be as the swine trampling pearls beneath our feet.

The main remedy will be deeper study of the Gospel's glorious truths. Let, then, the resolution be firmly made, that we will be more conversant with the deep things of God. Every announcement should be grasped with the firm hand of faith. Amid the truths which here meet our adoring gaze, our Heavenly Father's love is foremost. This note sounds most loud, sweet, awakening, enchanting. It surely claims our foremost thoughts this year. It is the very atmosphere of heaven. It beamed over the family of the redeemed before time was: it shall as brightly beam when time shall be no more. It had no cradle: it shall have no grave. It had no birth: it shall have no death. It is coëval and commensurate with "I Am that I Am."

Discerning this unfathomable spring, we should next drink deeply of the life-giving streams which descend from it. Here we are called to ponder God's eternal purpose and sure decree, and all the provisions of the Covenant of Grace. A feast of fat things is spread before us. Let us inwardly digest the refreshing viands.

Hear the announcement of St. Paul. In his earliest writings to the Thessalonians, we read, "We are bound to give thanks **alway** to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Here the purposes of love, in their origin, their end, their intermediate links, brightly shine. The sight is dazzling. We meekly bow the knee. Our souls are invigorated, and we feel that we are "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

This is no single declaration. In the letter to the Ephesian Church, what statement demands earliest notice? We read:—

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Grand food here ministers refreshment. Again our souls are ravished with intense delight. We move forward with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

St. Peter reiterates such fundamental truth: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." This goblet confirms our power. We lift up our heads as heirs of "eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began."

Without further enumeration, shall we not resolve that these sublime verities shall be the solid sustenance of our souls throughout the days which may be ours in this year? They were not written to be regarded with indifference, but to have due and prominent position in our thoughts. No student of astronomy would exclude the sun. No admirer of mountain scenery would omit the loftiest peaks. Fruitless is the day which enlarges not intelligence of God's will. It is sublime instruction:—"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not. Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

The contemplation will raise high above all paltry pursuits and pleasures. It will bear us heavenward on the deep stream of spiritual rapture, and ennoble with the utmost grandeur of principle and life. It will invigorate with strength to dash to atoms the devices and temptations of the Evil One, and will animate for signal exploits in the fight of faith. The eye gazing

on the sun cannot for a time discern inferior objects. The Christian champion thus fortified will nobly fight.

Other streams flow to give vigour to our souls. Evidences of eternal love abound, exceeding all that we could ask or think, and all are given for our growth in grace. Let mention of the gift of Jesus suffice. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Look to Bethlehem's manger. The co-eternal and co-equal Son—the mighty God, assumes our flesh. Mark His walk on earth. It was as a sunbeam untainted by surrounding impurities—fulfilling to the utmost every requirement of the law—working out a robe of perfect righteousness wherewith to invest the family of faith, and to render them worthy inmates of the heavenly home. Behold Him on the accursed tree, by His precious blood washing out every stain of our countless iniquities; satisfying every demand of divine justice; silencing the thunders of the outraged law; receiving in His own Person its tremendous curse; drinking to the dregs every drop of justly incensed wrath. Dive into the mystery of His now pleading on high; claiming the purchase of His vicarious death; extending His wounded hands as our High Priest; showing the names of the redeemed on His shoulders and on His breast; preparing mansions for them in His Father's house. The reception of these truths will make our souls as adamant to resist evil. Our profiting will be real, and we shall advance rapidly from strength to strength. Thus we shall become vigorous trees of righteousness, richly laden with celestial fruit. Act out this resolve, and blessed will be the morn which witnessed its birth.

Another stream, too, brings much nourishment. Let our souls feast not only on God's all-decreeing mind, but also on His all-arranging hand. As are His counsels, so is His action. As is His prescience, so is His work. What He plans in eternity He executes in time.

In accordance, Scripture tells us, that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose:" that "all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." These and similar declarations are no unmeaning or delusive assurances. When grasped by faith, they change this world into a Paradise of joy, and transform weakness into heroic might. How strong do we become when we realize that our state, whatever it may be, is ordered for our truest weal. Poverty is no more poor when brought to us by the all-enriching hand. Disease and pain no more overpower, when we experience that they are the Good Physician's will. No billows can overwhelm those who are seated in

this lifeboat. In every circumstance we shall realize the truth, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

Do some inquire, May not this love be extinguished by our many sins, and may not our proneness to desert God cause Him to abandon us? The Word again administers surmounting power. A chorus of assurances resounds:—

I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee." "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are thus led to the wisdom of familiarizing our minds with the work of the Holy Spirit: otherwise the fear might intrude that we are helpless to form such resolves. To dispel such enfeebling doubts, let us contemplate Him as the source of our strength throughout our days in this year. Undervaluing and infrequent views here may lead to leanness of soul. It is the Tempter's aim to hide these glories from us. Great is the shame and terrible is the loss when such dimness is allowed to blind our eyes. It is sad ignorance to regard Him as an influence or unsubstantial agency, operating as a ray of light, or tempestuous wind, or gentle breeze, or refreshing dew. Emblems are not realities. Pictures have no life. He should be known as the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Omnipresent God. "Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. In this Trinity, none is afore or after other: none is greater or less than another: but the whole Three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal." In this unity and equality let us behold unity and equality of Love. The Spirit's love is not eclipsed by the love of the Father and the Son. It as truly and as brightly shines.

Let us then each day strengthen in this knowledge. Some instances will minister rich food. We adore the Saviour's love in becoming bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh. We are taught that the Holy Spirit framed the tabernacle which received the indwelling God. Throughout the earthly career, the Holy Spirit was given without stint or measure unto Jesus.—He is led into the wilderness of conflict. The Holy Spirit is His guide. He returns to Galilee. The Holy Spirit still beckons. He commences His public instruction by avowing, "The Spirit

of the Lord is upon Me." When He ascends the Altar of the Cross, it is recorded, that "through the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God." As we adore the love of Jesus throughout His work, so let us adore the love of the Spirit in His co-operating fellowship. Avowedly He regulates the matters of the infant Church. Witness: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

We should not take the Scriptures into our hands without the thought that every word proceeds from the Holy Spirit. He is the real Author of the Volume. In it what precious promises warm and cheer our hearts—what holy precepts sanctify our path—what records of redeeming love exalt us to the pinnacle of joy—what melting invitations—what sweet assurances allure us to the Saviour's breast! As we delightedly peruse, we should as delightedly realize,—The Scriptures are manifestations of the Holy Spirit's love.

But the boon would be valueless without the superadded power to discern its worth. This aid is lovingly imparted. The Spirit comes to open our blind eyes—to unstop our deaf ears—to melt our stony hearts—to give us grace to receive with meekness the engrafted Word—to implant the living faith which flies in rapture to the Saviour's arms. If we have been led to realize our fallen estate by nature—to loathe and abhor our deep corruptions, and our iniquities towering above the skies—and to wash in the fountain opened for all sin and uncleanness, this change from Nature's deadness has been inwrought by the Holy Spirit's entrance. If visits to the Throne of Grace be high in our chief joys, it is the Spirit who gives us boldness of access. If there we hold communion with our God, and open out the desires of our hearts, and lift high the voice of praise, it is the Spirit who thus helps our infirmities, and prompts each interceding word. As we journey onward, if we meeten for the heavenly home, it is wholly through His presence. We must feel that, apart from Him, there never has been one good thought within our breasts. May it not be added, that there never would have been one good thought throughout this fallen world, if God the Holy Spirit had not given it birth! In every Christian work—in every scheme of benevolence—in every effort of missionary zeal—in every victory over the power of evil—we see how He has loved and wrought and triumphed.

Let us then throughout this year be studious in realizing and adoring His operations: and scorn the thoughts which give not all honour unto Him. Happy indeed will this year be, if in each day we delight in the support of such sanctifying revelations. Timidity will no more tremble, and fears no more turn pale, and irresolution will disappear. Courage will not faint. Compromise will not bewilder. As we put on the Christian

armour, we shall feel that the victory is won, and that we march onward over the necks of slaughtered foes. He will not stoop whose gaze is always upward. He will not be poor-hearted who revels in sublimities. His health will thrive who dwells in the bracing climate of pure truth. In Jehoshaphat's spirit we shall rejoice in victory before a blow is struck. Our war-cry will be thanksgiving. If these resolves of January 1, 1881, strengthen and animate and fortify our souls, a resolute band of Christian champions will wave high the banner of the Cross: be bulwarks for England's Reformation, and valiantly storm the strongholds of superstition and infidelity.

H. LAW.

ART. II.—THE CHURCH OF ROME AND THE LAND WAR IN IRELAND.

IT may prove worthy of attention if some reflections are offered upon the attitude taken by the Hierarchy and Priesthood of the Roman Mission in Ireland, on so momentous an occasion as the Irish Land League movement.

But first it will be necessary to take a review of the general situation of affairs, and to bring out the salient points of this question into a clearer light. A hundred years ago saw Ireland banded in the brotherhood of the Volunteers and led by her nobility and gentry to oppose English oppression and misrule. Twelve years later, the Society of United Irishmen report on certain "laws in force in this realm," and the Committee denounces these statutes as "a galling yoke and unexampled for their severity." All these, however, have long since been swept away, and in their place liberal measures substituted from year to year. But now Mr. Gladstone's Land Act of 1870, Mr. I. Butt's advanced measures, Judge Longfield's easy plan, and Mr. Shaw Lefevre's generous proposals to facilitate peasant purchase, are all pronounced inadequate solutions of the Land Question. And something far beyond all these is demanded—in fact, there is demanded what Mr. John Bright has just pronounced

A violent and impossible scheme, where tenants were apparently to fix their own rents, under which a landlord is an object to be got rid of or banished, or where the Government is to undertake some gigantic transaction of raising two or three hundred millions of money to buy them out of their estates, and to convey those estates over to the farmers who now cultivate them.

If it be naturally enough inquired what has taken place thus to pile up the demands of the Irish farmer, and to exasperate the country into an alarming attitude to enforce these inordinate