

Noyes (I. P.)

The new year (1895)



THE NEW YEAR.

We travel in circles. Our universe is, to us at least, a series of circles. Our earth is a globe, and in a circle, slightly elongated, we travel around the sun. Our pathway through space is a combination of circles. That we may the better facilitate the practical affairs of our civilized life, it is quite essential that we measure these circles, and so divide them into such convenient parts that they shall be to us a glorious pathway of light and rule or measurement whereby we shall "guide our barks o'er the stormy seas of time." In order to make this division and measurement we must commence somewhere. One point is as good as another. What one shall we select in order to calculate our times and the space that we must go over; from what point shall we start? It matters not. It is purely arbitrary. Different ages and countries have had, and even still have, different arbitrary points to start from; at least in their terrestrial affairs. As to the heavens, there is more uniformity; indeed with all civilized people, intelligent enough to calculate time by the position of the earth in space, the system is practically the same. Astronomy being quite the oldest, if not the very oldest science developed by man. It is strange that knowledge and discovery of heavenly things should have so preceded the knowledge and use of practical things upon the solid earth itself. But that this is so, is a fact too prominent for us to deny. If all the people of the earth could agree in all their national and social affairs as they agree in this, what a heaven below this earth might be. The ancient prophets in their time looked forward to such an era. Thousands of years have passed, "as a watch in the night," and we have not yet reached that ideal era; and what is more we never may; still it is quite evident to many of us that the world has advanced rapidly within the past few hundred years. And the advance has been in direct ratio to the development of our resources in all lines. We are making more rapid strides now in a decade than in the "good old times," was made in centuries. In the times of Mohammed there had been little progress; essentially things were, as they had been for ages prior thereto. Mohammed had his ideal "Borak." To day "Borak's" are common and practical realities; and as time advances the development goes on.

To come back to our starting point, the common point in the heavens, with all nations, is the point or sign of Aries. From this point we start with the measurements that govern our position in the great circles in which we move. This too is arbitrarily divided into a certain number, (twelve) equal parts. These divisions are very old, and have come down to us through many centuries of time. The modern world has no cause to change them; they are not only ancient but good; so we continue them.

In terrestrial affairs, the occidental world, with the exception of Russia, in keeping the run of time, commences with the first day of January. The only exception to this is the theocratic state of Israel, which still contains the old biblical system of measuring time by the moons. Our North American Indians in this were much like the Israelites. They both worshipped the one God—Jehovah and the Great Spirit, and they both reckoned their time by the moons.

The calculations whereby we proceed, are all, and must necessarily be arbitrary. As in the heavens we start with the arbitrary point Aries, so in regard to the affairs of the earth we commence, or make our start from the month of January. The calculations whereby we proceed are all, and must necessarily be arbitrary. The all important thing in this connection is that we all

agree to some one point. This makes uniformity; and uniformity in these things is quite essential for the world. For by all following one system there is less trouble for the world to keep the run of the passing time.

We divide up our years into months; our months into weeks. The days are to a certain extent already fixed for us, by the rising and setting sun; yet with all this the same arbitrary system here follows. Notwithstanding the variations of the length of the daylight, it has been agreed upon to reckon our daily time from midnight to midnight. And this is as arbitrary as all the greater reckonings. So our old year ends with the last moment of December—up to the time arbitrarily marked by our time pieces. Within a few years even another arbitrary mark has been settled upon. In the United States we have adopted the four well-known and arbitrary divisions of Eastern, Central, Mountain and Pacific time, with an hour between each. So when we speak of the measurement of time we intuitively consider many points. And while they may be complicated, we readily conform to the complication of the situation, and there is little or no difficulty with it.

All over the occidental world, and wherever its broad influence is felt, with the exception of the slight variation in Russia, what we termed the old year of 1894 died or ceased to be, immediately after the hands on the dial passed the hour of low twelve, midnight, December 31st. The old year no sooner passed away than the new year commenced. There is no period of time, for contemplation, or preparation for a new condition, between the two events. The new year is instantly upon us. It comes in a most arbitrary manner. No sergeant at arms can turn back the hands of real time. Time moves on with his regular pace. He pauses not for grief, nor does he hasten his steps for joy. To Time joy and grief are the same.

The press is ever busy with the past, the present and the future. It however deals mostly with the present; still it does not neglect the past nor the future. It is ever indulging in retrospect upon the past; and often attempts the part of the prophet as to the future. As the end of the year draws near it is very common for people to review the months that have passed. It is a period of good resolutions, some of which are kept and some not. All the so called reforms that are advocated are not all sound or desirable. Some that are not good as a whole, may in part have some very desirable points. The social reforms that are before the world for approval or disapproval are much like the improvements in the mechanical devices. Some improved machinery is invented; within it is a good idea; but the inventor has not grasped some important detail, or perhaps other powers are not sufficiently developed and render some essential assistance. The machine is delayed; or if put upon the market is crude. It wants something to make it more complete. By and by some other mind, with the superior advantages of the times, suggests certain changes. In our social reforms we advance, not by one grand rush, nor by grand charges Abaddon-like in character, but rather like the drops of water that wears away the hard stone. There are long periods when we do not seem to gain, like the ship at sea on the "losing tack," and yet she is not losing, she is really gaining advantage ground, from which to make the tack that will reveal the gain. So we advance on all our lines. When the new day dawns it is well to make good resolutions for the hours that shall come. When the new week is upon us it is well to follow up these good resolutions for the days that shall come; and when the new months, and new years dawn upon us it is well to continue the good resolutions and to picture to

ourselves the happiness that is anticipated by following them. Good resolutions are good things, but it is better to make them a practical reality. Our life is a warfare, therefore it is difficult to carry into effect all the good resolutions that present themselves to us. Still if we can gain one or two points in ten, there is a gain. The more points gained the better. The man though who makes the strongest resolutions does not always labor to execute them. The earnest man who forms good resolutions seldom if ever refers to them. He well knows the weakness of human nature. It is better to go ahead with a general resolution, under all circumstances to do the best we can. To sail our individual bark as the mariner sails his vessel. The winds and tides are variable. Then comes the dense fog when no lights nor objects can be seen. All must depend upon "dead reckoning," and the better these so called "dead reckonings" have been attended to when the wind, tides and light was good, the better the chances for the vessel when the dense fog settles all about it, making the sense of sight comparatively worthless. The information gained in fair weather is of material assistance to us.

It is certainly better for the people of the world to grow towards each other. The better they become acquainted, the better they understand each other, and the more inclined are they to profit by the thought and labor of each. The world first devoted its thoughts towards the heavens. Much attention was paid to this branch. Years and centuries follow each other. This department of science is handed down until it is received by the whole earth. Advancements go on in other lines; differences grow up between the nations. They follow different paths. They indulge in many works and variety of works. But over them all, or associated with them all are the old astronomical ideas, in which the whole world is educated. With the departure of the old year come thoughts of wrongs and false systems that have existed, and that we earnestly desire to see overcome and driven from off the face of our fair earth. With the new year we as earnestly desire to see good measures put on foot, and so supported that they shall be a success.

"Ring out the old,
Ring in the new,
Ring out the false,
Ring in the true!"

The words of Abou Ben Ardem are also well to bear in mind at this season; indeed at all seasons. His lesson is for men to love their fellow-men. Perhaps not in any personal or narrow sense, but in the spirit that champions the wrongs of the world, that seeks to put down all oppression, and battles for the spirituality of man; "Good will towards men" in its highest sense. We owe a duty to ourselves as well as to the world, and to the world as well as to ourselves. Let these two ideas work together in harmony, and it is quite evident that all will be well. Let the advent of the new year abound in good resolutions, resolutions that shall include these two grand ideas; and the further and deeper they are carried the better will be the results. No captain ever sailed a ship just where he desired, unless with the saving clause, that he simply desired to do the best he could, and even then he evidently tries to gain more than he actually did. With the new year let the resolution be to gain all we can in that which leads towards the higher life—higher life for ourselves and for the world. And the while let our aspirations be as high as possible; under all circumstances earnestly endeavor to do the best we can. Old John Brown, of early Kansas days, is reported to have said, in his characteristic language, that "it was a mighty big thing for a man to do the best he can"; a grand motto for the new year, and indeed for all time.

I. P. N.

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