

# THE RADIO RECORD

Published Weekly

REGISTERED G.P.O., WELLINGTON, N.Z., AS A NEWSPAPER.

Vol. III., No. 24.

WELLINGTON, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27, 1929.

(Price, 3d.)

## In these December Days

Gripping and Reflective Talk by Rev. A. B. Chappell



SI talk to you this evening, I ask particularly that you will, all of you, remember that I am guided in the choice of each of the subjects of my chats with you by the events that make an impression, from time to time, on our minds. You may think me this evening a little sombre in mood. Well, what of that? There are shadows in life, and it is good not to be afraid of them. Better to look closely at them, to see of what they are made, lest they become spectrally mysterious and affrighting. They are shadows now.

The year wears on. Another Christmas is upon us. We have reminder that life has a journey's end. The calendar speaks in a monitory voice. Nor is that all in the grey thought of these December days, hurrying on to their own and the year's end. A notable figure has passed from the life of our city and province and land and nation. Not even Bishop Cleary's great gifts of mind and heart could withstand the call to lay life down. You will, I know, readily forgive me if, musing, as so many of you are musing about these things, I let my thought run on this evening about these hastening December days and the other reminders that time passes from us all. If sombre, however, we need not be morbid, but rather wholesomely thoughtful.

Into the memorial urn of the past the ashes of another year are beginning softly to fall. Soon the record of its dead deeds will be all written, and the spent life be passed from reality to recollection, if, indeed, it have so much survival. It is a time for quiet meditation. True "Finis" has not yet been appended to Time's story: the grim prophets of the world's sudden end are still discredited. The earth swings on through its vast orbit, and another new year

FROM IYA is given a weekly feature talk by the Rev. A. B. Chappell that is welcomed by all listeners. His subject is chosen by Mr. Chappell entirely at his own discretion, and frequently is determined only at the last moment. Specially typical and appealing in its reflectiveness is the following, recently given, for the publication of which appeal was made by many listeners.

awaits birth. We shall be buoyant and optimistic as of yore; hope springs eternal. But for a little, as the old year's ritual honour is beginning to be duly paid, we do well to let its passing subdue us to soberness.

Not without reason is the calendar made. It is no arbitrary device. It is written in the circles of the sky; and as the great lines move across the page of space they mark the points that man has used for the ordering of his days. No magic moment may separate the years as human experience knows them. If no calendar were kept we might pass all unknowing on through their succession. Yet in the journeying of our planet these points of new departure are set, and our noting of them brings thought of human ends and beginnings. They preach to heeding ears a truth of great practical value—the truth that most things have an end. It is the great flywheel of workday wisdom, the steady influence of life.

A modern poet has arrestingly told his story of the first dawning of the ideas of time and death upon human understanding. In an Eastern land, far from Eden, a great tribe rose from the offspring of Cain. For a while they knew nothing of death. Life seemed endless, and time had no definition. Cain knew, alone of all this Eden-banished host, what death was; the murder of his brother was an ever-burning recollection. He kept his secret, and no thought of life's end came to check the wanton joy that

everywhere had sway. Then, one day, in the middle of some youthful games, a flying stone struck Lamech's son to the ground. His companions gathered about his breathless body; they brought playthings; and tried to arouse him from his sleep. But no such sleep as this had ever been known there. No response met their persistent pleadings: the boy was heedless. Into the group of the perplexed youths came Cain, and he whispered, "The boy is dead." The word brought no meaning until Cain told the things he knew of life's destruction. The people listened awestruck. "A new spirit from that hour came o'er the house of Cain." Before, there had been but the vaguest sense of time! now it gave to life a value past reckoning. Even the sunshine had a different appearance. "Work grew eager, and device was born."

It seemed the light was never loved before.

Now each man said, "'Twill go and come no more."

No budding branch, no pebble from the brook,

No form, no shadow, but new dear-ness took

From the one thought that Life must have an end.

To muse ever on death is to fail to live healthily. That way uselessness lies. But to live as if earthly life had no end, and opportunity no limit, is equally errant. That way lies Fools' Paradise. It were well to face the fact that an end is sure, that the only certain thing about life is its own uncertainty.

The wisely gay of olden days had a skeleton at their feasts. They were wise to have their feasts. They would have been foolish, to hasten their own dwindling to skeletons by neglect of

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