

# Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.  
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## Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

### A NEW YEAR'S HYMN.

Hail dawning year! thy step is on the mountains!  
Thy wind-harp soundeth through the frozen vales!  
Thy silence, reigned, o'er the ice-bound fountains!  
Thy breath, comes to us in the wintry gales!

Another year! to fail the hopes we cherish!  
Direct to heaven, the sinner's wand ring eye;  
Warm him with falling tears, before he perish;  
And, in dense gloom, the death eternal die.

A year, to haste where sorrow's child is weeping,  
And weep in unfeigned sympathy with him;  
And where, o'er those who fade, long vigils keeping,  
The eyes that watch are waxing weak and dim.

When happy voices thankful songs are singing,  
To carol with them a responsive strain;  
And while the rapid months are onward winging,  
Live for the honor of our Master's name.

A year, to remember all for succour calling;  
Around the weak our sympathies to twine;  
Stretch out the kindly hand to help the falling;  
To cherish motives noble and divine.

When half-clad wanderers round our pathway shiver,  
With tender hand to clothe their trembling forms,  
To ask of him whose love flows like a river,  
To shield the poor from life's tempestuous storms.

A year, to haste where life's bright sun is sinking,  
Below the cloudy horizon of time;  
Where holy ones a bitter cup are drinking,  
Yet drink with patience from a source divine.

Where dampness cold the brow serene is covering,  
And messengers of peace from worlds above,  
Are round the fading Christian's death-couch hovering,  
To vie with angels in their deeds of love.

Another year, should gloom thy path be shrouding,  
And sorrows cluster thickly round thy way;  
Should doubts and fears the sun of heaven be clouding,  
Then look to Jesus: Christian, trust and pray.

Through this dim vestibule serenely straying,  
Your lamps, with oil which wasteth not, to trim;  
Till their pure radiance round the footstep playing,  
Guard you from wand'ring in the paths of sin.

Another year! to sow with heartfelt weeping;  
To toil, to pray, ye ransomed sons of light!  
To hope through all things for a glorious reaping,  
And keep your jewelled garments pure and white.

Then when the last hour comes, the Saviour grant-  
ing,  
His love divine to light the shadows dim;  
Your head will press the dying pillow, chanting,  
"With joy, the saints' triumphant vesper hymn."

On, to that world which the redeemed inherit,  
Shall guardian seraphs bear thee on their wing;  
There the glad anthems of your ransomed spirit,  
Will make the golden streets with music ring.

Onslow.

## Religious.

### THE NEW YEAR'S HIDDEN GIFTS.

BY MARIANNE FARNINGHAM.

With hands full of blessings comes the New Year—holding forth to us much that we can see, keeping back in the hidden recesses of its clasped hands still more. Very pleasant are its visible gifts—new year's wishes and congratulations, the hearty grasp of hands that are warm and true, love-lamps fresh lighted to hear with us through the dark future, and, above all, the unfulfilling promise, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be."

But these are not its hidden gifts. These are what it bears on its surface when first it is ushered into our presence. Very pleasant and precious are they all—love-tokens from our Father in heaven, who cares for us and our happiness, and will have us singing songs of gratitude and trust to him.

And the New Year's hidden gifts are as good as those which it brings openly. And as, one by one, the treasures from its casket are exhibited, we shall see how each one is a blessing in disguise.

That is one—that loss in the coming month, which as yet you know nothing of. Fearing no diminution of earthly good, you are stepping gladly over the threshold separating one time from another. But the new year has a hidden gift for which you will not eagerly open your hand. Care, anxiety, and tribulation, instead of prosperity and ease! Not a pleasant change—but a blessed one, or it would not be made.

That sickness, which shall take the bloom

from your cheek, and the sparkle from your eye, is another of the new year's hidden gifts. And it comes straight from the Father's loving hand—a hand that cannot err. You would rather not have it, you shrink back from the prospect; but it is a blessing, nevertheless.

That bereavement—but here our hearts cannot help crying out, Anything but that, O Lord! Let not that be one of the new year's hidden gifts. Well, again may we shelter ourselves under the Almighty love of our Father. He will send us no sorrow that is not absolutely necessary, and that does not bring a blessing in its wake.

Altogether unlooked for and unexpected may be the new year's hidden gifts, and of a very variegated character. Some which, if we knew of, would fill our hearts with joyous expectation; some which would overshadow the new year with fear and misgiving. How grateful should we be that the future is thus hidden from us; how resolutely trustful of the unfulfilling kindness of our Friend.

Gladly and fearlessly may we go forth to greet the new year, knowing that it is but a messenger of love. Our language should be, "Choose Thou for us, only prepare us for whatever Thou hast prepared for us."

### YEARLY TALES.

BY THE REV. H. WATTS.

Through the mercy and goodness of God, we have been spared to see the commencement of a new year. The old year with all its changes, is now lost in the eternity of the past. Now we enter upon another year without knowing what shall befall us. We may not live to see its close, or we may. If we do, we shall again have joys and troubles, losses and gains, triumphs and defeats. We do not expect to be always singing, nor do we fear that we shall be always groaning. We look out for sunshine as well as storm, for day as well as night, and have faith to believe that all things work together for our good. Well! whatever may be our lot, let us, with bared brows, thank God for a new year. It is something to be alive, more still to be healthy in body, and better far to be healthy in soul. For these and ten thousand kindred mercies, let us adopt the language of the Psalmist, and say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me bless his holy name."

In the Word of God I find a very remarkable statement—one that has often arrested my attention, and one which, if meditated upon, may positively do us good on the present occasion. It is a passage which has relation to the fleetness of time, and it runs thus:—"We spend our years as a tale that is told." Psalm xc. 9. Is it true? Let us see.

Some of us this past Christmas, perhaps, after partaking of good Christmas fare, sat down by the fireside, and whilst the huge log sent its flame and sparks and smoke up the roaring chimney, we passed away the time by listening to short tales, told us by good-natured narrators, some of them making us merry, and others making us sad. Did you, reader, as you sat by that bright fire, and listened to one of those tales, think that it was a type of human life? The voice that interested you then is not now heard; the tale that pleased you so much, you only half remember; the humorous part, that so tickled your fancy and made you so merry, hardly now calls forth a smile; and the tear dropped at the narration of an affecting incident is lost for ever. The tale is told; and its remembrance only serves to illustrate the nature and brevity of human life. As life speeds, the years seem to become shorter instead of longer; and when the termination of life approaches, the beginning will nearly be forgotten.

How are we spending our years? It we spend our years as a tale that is told, let us take care that our years shall make a good tale. Some tales are good, and some bad; some have a useful tendency, others a corrupt tendency. Among the latter we may class most novels and romances. A good tale is not a story merely that contains stirring incident, humorous narrative, well laid plots, and fine poetry; a good tale will be of such a character as to make us better after reading it than we were before; and if the tale we

read has not that tendency, however talented may be the author, it had better be thrown into the waste paper basket, or cast into the fire.

"Good love-stories," as they are called—stories praised to the skies by sentimental young ladies, whose idea of a good story is embodied in the phrase "love at the beginning, an elopement in the middle, and a marriage at the end"—are not often good, though they are often the types of the lives of their advocates, doubtless. Let us not be represented by such types; rather let us seek grace of God, that our lives may be represented by well-written tales full of solid matter, inculcating good only, shedding a hallowed influence on all around, kindling love in many breasts, and ever tending to make the world nobler, freer, happier. Such lives may be spent, but they are never lost. They are treasured up in the memories of the great and good when their owners have passed away, seeing that it is written, "The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance."

If we spend our years as a tale that is told, let us live as if our tale is to come to an end. Reader, as all tales have an end, your tale will be some day brought to a conclusion. You may be planning schemes, plotting, adding scene to scene, but every paragraph brings the end of the tale nearer. The God who said, three thousand years ago, "Return, ye children of men," says, "Return, ye children of men" still. The man full of health and vigour and warm blood to-day, shall, by God's mandate, be a cold, lifeless mass of flesh to-morrow. The pestilence shall walk in darkness; fevers shall yearly carry off their thousands; sudden deaths meet men as they walk along the streets; the cold, icy finger of the dark and dreaded enemy touches the hearts alike of the king and the pauper, the old and the young; and so they all pass away as a tale that is told. If you are not prepared for the finishing stroke, you will have to tell your tale in hell; only as you live for Christ will you be prepared at the last to lay down your active pen, at the completion of the closing sentence, with a trembling hand but joyous heart. No life tales close well but those that close with Christ.

To spend this year wisely and well, let us seek, by God's help, to have some brighter scene in the story than we had last year. Reader, if you are unconverted, your worldly glory, your gaudy show, your ribald songs, your boisterous laughter, your ungodly companions, may all look pretty and pleasant in the tale now, but when the tale comes to be read in the light of God's judgment, they will all look repulsive and awful. These are the bright scenes: those that give a man to see that he is at peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ; those that unveil to him, day by day, the beauty of the Saviour's passion, and the worth of his blood, righteousness, and salvation; those that unfold to him experimentally the power of the Spirit's graces in the human heart and in the daily life, all tending to the subjugation of sin, the exaltation of holiness, the good of man, and the glory of God; those that give him the feeling of constant safety, enabling him to realize that whether waking or sleeping, amid the motley throng or in solitude, living or dying, with him all shall be well. In other words, those that enable him to triumph in the thought that, should his tale be finished at once, he is right for heaven. These are the bright scenes that form the bright tale. With these scenes, it matters not though our years are spent as a tale that is told. Let them, in such a case, roll on faster and faster; while they only bring the sinners to our eternal home—in that home to tell our tale to heaven's wondering hosts, who, with us, will thank God for its beginning, and worship him for its end.

### SWISS BAPTISTS.

Although Switzerland stands in the world's history as a sort of synonym for devotion to freedom, it does not in all respects justify its honorable position in that regard. As in other countries on the continent of Europe, the Baptists of Switzerland have been, and still are compelled to contend for even the rights of religious liberty that are allowed to others. In the Canton of St. Gall, the Constitution adopted in 1861 guaranteed to all

citizens the free exercise of their religion. In the following year a congregation of Baptists asked that this provision might be applied in their case. It required two years and a half for the authorities to determine the question whether Baptists are entitled to privileges constitutionally secured to all citizens. At length the request was granted, and now it is said, "the Baptists will not be compelled to have their children baptized, and the spectacle need not now be repeated of a father wiping from the forehead of his child the baptismal water with which it was sprinkled against his consent." It should be added, to the honor of the Council, or Synod of the above-named Canton, that it went farther than this, relieved the members of dissenting religious bodies, acknowledged by the State as such, of ecclesiastical taxes. This is a step in advance of England itself.

In other Cantons the old opposition continues. Lately, at Mospach, in Lucerne, a man named Lauber had his six children taken from him and placed in various families, that they might be educated to the Roman Catholic religion, because, having recently become a Baptist, he refused to have his last child "baptized." How long it takes the world to escape from the dark ages! A new sect of Baptist, called Neobaptists, is coming into notice in Switzerland. In their principles they are much like others of the name, but seem to press those principles somewhat farther than is customary with their brethren.—Times.

### OF RELIGIOUS POLICY.

A good man, now departed, said that Presbyterianism had flourished most when its preachers were most distinguished by a zeal for saving souls. When they tried to compete in externals they found that other churches easily outran them, having a long way the start in that line. These are not his exact words, but express his thought. Is it not a thought worthy to be laid to heart by us, and by all evangelical believers?

Much is said and written about denominational policy. The only policy that will build us up is God's policy, which is shortly expressed in the words, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Unless He build the house, they labor in vain that build it. Unless He work with us, our toil is ineffectual. We must then labor for the same end for which He is engaged. He sent His Son to seek and save that which was lost. He sends His Spirit to administer the gracious kingdom of His Son. He calls His people to be laborers in His vineyard. Only as they devote themselves to His service, for His work, in His spirit, have they any promise or any hope.—W. & R.

### I WISHED IT TRUE.

When I was quite young, many years ago, all the people around me in my rural home, so far as they had any religious belief, were evangelical. Only good seed had been sown, and on those hill-sides many gracious plants had taken deep root, grown strong, and produced the best of fruit. But the time came when "men slept," and an enemy crept in, sowing tares. A backslidden member of the church, under censure for inebriety, returned from a visit "down country," where he had heard a Mr. Ballou preach Universalism, and became enamored of the flesh-pleasing doctrine. Immediately he commenced retailing what he had welcomed to his own heart, and not long after, he succeeded in establishing a monthly Sunday service in a school-house for a preacher of his new faith. The friends of truth were excited, and pursued a course not the best adapted to repress the germs of heresy. We young people, tired of the old preaching, and wishing to throw off the restraints of a severe morality, went to hear the explanations of the novel theory. The preacher was fluent and persuasive, and many of the young, greatly to the grief of their parents, were captivated.

I heard the whole argument, and for a time was in danger of being ensnared. From a child I had been taught the Scriptures by my mother and my grandmother, but I had none of that faith which stands in the power of God, and therefore I was insecure. I desired