

The Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

NEW SERIES.
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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

CASING LL ON JESUS.

I left it all with Jesus
Long ago;
All my sin I brought Him,
And my woe.
When by faith I saw Him
On the tree,
Heard His small still whisper,
"Tis for thee."
From my heart the burden
Roll'd away—
Happy day!

I leave it all with Jesus,
For He knows
How to steal the bitter
From life's woes;
How to gild the tear-drops
With His smile,
Make the desert garden
Bloom awhile;
When my weakness leanness
On His might,—
All seems light.

I leave it all with Jesus
Day by day;
Faith can firmly trust Him
Come what may,
Hope has drop'd her anchor,
Found her rest
In the calm, sure heaven
Of His breast;
Love seems it heaven
To abide
At His side.

Oh! leave it all with Jesus,
Drooping soul!
Tell not half thy story,
Eut the whole.
Worlds on worlds are hanging
On His hand,
Life and death are waiting
His command;
Yet, His tender bosom
Makes thee room—
Oh, come home!

Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

A NEW YEAR'S BLESSING.

"A HAPPY NEW YEAR"—will be the exclamation when friends meet this morning, all the world over. The Christian does not refuse to adopt the usual expression of good wishes, while he holds himself at liberty to interpret the words in a Christian manner.

What will make this year a year of blessing? In order to answer that question, let us survey the state of the world in a religious point of view, that we may learn what is the special want of the times. We have no need to perplex ourselves about the unquietness of France or Germany, Spain or Italy, or with the schemes of ambitious, intriguing politicians. "Let the potsherders strive with the potsherders of the earth" (Isa. xlv. 9.) It will be sufficient for us to look at things religiously, and to ask, with solemn earnestness, "Watchman, what of the night?" (Isa. xxi. 11.)

That part of the world which is called "Christendom" is divided into the Eastern, the Roman Catholic, and the Protestant Churches. The Eastern Churches are for the most part masses of ignorance and superstition. The Roman Catholic church, in addition to the unchristian dogmas, the reception of which is declared to be necessary to salvation, has now required of its members a profession of faith in the infallibility of the pope, thus placing the yoke of an ignoble bondage on the necks of the people, and depriving the word of God of its just honour; while at the same time it avows utter hostility to freedom in its most cherished forms, refuses to acknowledge the rights of conscience, and claims to be superior to "the powers that be," which are "ordained of God" (Rom. xiii. 1.)

Priestly arrogance infects both the Romish and the Protestant Episcopal professions. It does not satisfy the clergy that they are respected as the authorised teachers of their congregations. They assume to be the only authorised teachers of religion, and will not recognise as christian ministers those who are held to be such in other

denominations, defending their exclusive claims by the assertion of what is called the "apostolic succession," which has been again and again shown to be a nullity, but is still tenaciously grasped. In the Roman Catholic community the priesthood is invested with the power of absolution, which involves the necessity of confession, and so the souls of men are bound down in subjection to their fellow-creatures. The practice of confession has been introduced by some of the clergy of the ritualistic sect into the church of England, and produces the usual effects, causing the priest to swell with pride, and reducing the people to the meanness of slavery—slavery of the worst sort.

Is it not to be greatly lamented that men who are called Protestants have so far forgotten the principles embodied in Protestantism as to connect the bestowment of grace with the outward observance of the "sacraments," as they are termed, but then only as they are administered by the priesthood—and to authorise prayers for the dead, the adoration of the Virgin Mary, and other Romish novelties, for resisting which our forefathers yielded up their lives? "Ichabod" is written on the walls of many a church, within which, in former years, the pure gospel of Christ was proclaimed.

The spread of unbelief is still more alarming. It assumes divers forms. Among scientific men, under the garb of reverence for law is hidden a denial of God. And men are dissuaded from prayer, which, it is alleged, is devoid of efficacy. Learning and criticism are employed for the mutilation of the Bible and the disparagement of its authority. Inspiration is shorn of its glory, and miracles are denounced as impostures. Large numbers of the working classes, particularly in cities and towns, reject the claims of religion, and hold its professors and friends in contempt. There is prevalent, too, even in Christian churches, a loose handling of the truth, and a want of reverential regard to the word of God. Intellect is deified, and its rightful honour denied to faith.

It is true, that the number of persons making a credible profession of godliness was never so great, and that the exhibition of Christian benevolence was never so extensive and glorious. It is also true, that the indirect influences of Christianity are powerful and manifold. But there are drawbacks, the existence of which cannot be concealed. The name "Christian" is assumed by millions who neither understand nor exemplify Christianity, but are nevertheless acknowledged as members of communities bearing the title of "churches"; while their unholy lives embolden the wicked in their vices, and are pleaded by observant heathen as offering valid reasons for their rejection of the gospel. Practices are connived at by many in the walks of business, which can hardly be deemed compatible with strict honesty. In the eagerness to amass riches many men are so engrossed by the pursuit that their higher interests are almost, if not altogether neglected; and those who serve them are deprived of opportunities for mental and religious improvement. The expenditure for luxuries, in the various forms of indulgence, occasions the waste of immense sums of money, for the use of which an account will have to be given hereafter. The contributions of even good men for benevolent and religious purposes (notwithstanding the progress made in that respect within the last fifty years) is in most instances sadly out of proportion to their wealth. Direct efforts for the conversion of sinners are few and feeble. Holy discipline is too generally slack and powerless in many churches; in others, it has long ceased to exist. The consecration of talent to the Lord's service is far beneath the demands of the cause; very many men who ought to be engaged in winning souls for God prefer to occupy situations where they may secure worldly ease and comfort.

The result of all this is that pro-

gress is slow and increase small. At home, Christianity is moving at a snail like pace. Abroad, converts are reckoned by tens (or, in exceptional cases, by hundreds) instead of thousands. At the present rate of advance, how long will it be before *Christendom* becomes *Christian*? How long, before "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea?" (Isa. xi. 9.)

What, then, is to be done? Much, every way. All christians are bound to search and try their ways, and turn again to the Lord" (Lam. iii. 40.) Whatever, in temper or in life, tends to make a man or a church a stumbling-block, must be removed. Sloth must be shaken off, covetousness repented of and forsaken, and all christian graces quickened into new life. And this must be every individual's personal care, the ministers, of course, taking the lead. Every one must "mourn apart" (see Zech. xii. 10-14.) Then, when we are doing the Lord's will, we may "cry mightily" to him for help; for the world will not be evangelized till the church is restored and revived. If some are ready to ask, "Is the Lord among us or not?" (Exod. xvii. 7)—let all lay hold on the promises, and plead them before the throne of grace, with faith and fervour. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isa. lxii. 6, 7.)

An outpouring of the Holy Spirit! An abundant outpouring! surely that is the gracious promise of the Lord? "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel" (Isa. xliv. 3-5.) The fulfillment of the promise is congenial with the mind and heart of God. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him" (Luke xi. 13)? When it shall please God to grant to his church a general outpouring of the Spirit the evils which have been adverted to in this paper will soon flee away. Scepticism will give place to faith and submission to God. Ritualism will hide its head. Worldliness will yield to spirituality. Will-worship will be given up. The Bible will recover its proper supremacy; and the universal response to its commands will be, as of old, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." (Exod. xxiv. 7.)

The writer is not a Millenarian. Repeated examinations of the statements of Scripture respecting the coming of the Lord have issued in the conviction that there are but two events to which that phrase can be legitimately applied, viz., the Incarnation and the Final Judgment. Jesus came at first, in the flesh, that he might accomplish the work of redemption, by giving himself for the Church. He will come again "the second time, without sin, unto salvation." (Heb. ix. 28), to complete the happiness of his people, and bring to a close the dispensations of God towards mankind. Meanwhile, he manages the concerns of the great spiritual kingdom, and the bestowment of the Spirit is under his control. By that bestowment he ensures the success of the Church. From age to age the showers of blessing which he has caused to descend have made the desert to "rejoice and blossom as the rose," (Isa. xxxv. 1), as at the time of the Reformation, and at the great revival in the last century. The present state of the world seems to call for a renewal of such manifestations; and the Church is warranted and encouraged to exclaim, "Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down," (Isa. lxiv. 1).

Brethren, this is the "NEW YEAR'S BLESSING." We can have it. If we "ask in faith, nothing wavering," (James i. 6); if we "pray without ceasing," (1 Thess. v. 17)—in the Church, in the family, and in the closet, if our walk before God shall harmonise with our prayers; if we put away the selfish, the worldly, the slothful, and live and labour for the Lord as well as pray—He will "have mercy upon us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us," and his way will be "known upon earth, his saving health among all nations" (Psalm lxxvii. 1, 2). The "New Year's blessing" will gladden and sanctify, and save, and the Church will "arise and shine, because her light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon her," (Isa. lx. 1).

J. M. C.

THE MENNONITES.

THEIR RELIGIOUS TENETS AND USAGES.
BY BLANDINA CONANT.

Forty thousand Mennonites, it is said, are about to seek a home in the United States. It is worth while to inquire what are the characteristics of this vast body of immigrants; what they bring to us from the old world; why Europe casts them forth.

The Mennonite seeks in the Bible not only rules to guide his conscience, but in his manners, dress, customs, he conforms with rigid exactness to a literal interpretation of its teachings. Inspired prophecy loses its poetic coloring, and the charm of Oriental hyperbole vanishes in painful fidelity to the letter. And yet there is a guilelessness in this homely simplicity which disarms criticism, especially since we find practice and precept conform so closely, that, with the Mennonite, turning his cheek to the smiter is no mere figure of speech, and that his goods are literally bestowed to feed the poor.

M. Michiel, in his charming sketch of life in the Vosges, gives an interesting account of this curious sect. These mountain solitudes offered asylums to the persecuted Mennonites. There they flocked in great numbers, and have turned the wilderness into a garden. But, whether in safety or in peril, in the desert or the crowded city, everywhere they have maintained the same characteristics. Narrow and prejudiced they are, no doubt, for persecution does not foster "sweetness and light;" and they have clung with the more ardent devotion to tenets sanctified by the blood of so many martyrs; but, though outraged, belied, and outlawed, they have been steadfast in their faith, and have never raised their hand against the oppressor.

The fundamental article of their creed is the rejection of infant baptism. Children are carefully instructed in the Mennonite doctrines, and at the age of fourteen or fifteen are usually admitted into the church. They do not believe that baptism effaces original sin; for that disappeared when the Saviour uttered his loud, expiring cry upon the cross. The price of our ransom was then paid, and man entered upon a new existence. Of course, children dying in infancy are saved, since they have committed no sin.

The Mennonites reject the authority of tradition, and take the Bible as their sole guide, not only in matters of faith but in the affairs of daily life. They have no stately hierarchy, no magnificent churches. All places are equally sacred to the Almighty. Why build him costly temples? From their own number their officers are every year selected—one, the pastor, or "Servant of All," to preach, baptize, administer the communion; and have the general oversight of the church; another, the "Second Servant," to expound the Scripture and the confession of faith, and to preach when the pastor is absent. To the third, the deacon, or "Servant of the Poor," is intrusted the care of the needy and infirm. That no false doctrine may slip in unawares, he is charged also with the oversight of the pastor's discourses. These officers re-

ceive no salary. They work with their hands, wear the same dress and live with the same frugal simplicity as their flock.

As the Mennonites follow the example and precepts of the Master with the utmost strictness no circumstances however trifling and minute, is neglected. Since he, after the Supper, washed the disciples' feet, they perform the same ceremony. In the ordinance of baptism, a studied simplicity is observed. The candidates wear new garments, but of no special fashion. One by one they are conducted into a room where only two persons, the pastor and the deacon, are present. Kneeling down, the catechumen repeats a *credo*. The pastor asks if he desires to be baptized. "Yes," he answers. "In whose name?" "In the name of Jesus our Lord." "What is your name?" The candidate gives his name. The deacon then presents a bowl of water to the pastor, who takes some in his hand and pours it on the head of the candidate, pronouncing the words: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Then, raising him, the pastor says, "Rise and go, in the name of Jesus Christ." After all the candidates have been baptized, they meet together to worship God. A month later, they take the communion for the first time. The Lord's Supper is regarded as merely a commemoration of Christ's death, and is administered as in most Protestant churches.

M. Michiel gives a lively description of the Mennonite marriage ceremonies in the Vosges. They follow, point by point, the model laid down, as they believe, in Scripture. The story of Eliezer, sent by Abraham to select a wife for Isaac, is copied as literally as possible.

When a young man has obtained his parents' consent to his marriage, he informs the *Third Servant* of his intentions, and employs him to make them known to the maiden and her family. The *Steckelmann* (as he is called on such occasions), mounts his horse, though the distance be but a few yards, and proceeds to the house of her father. He stops at the fountain, in the mountains placed before each dwelling. As soon as the girl perceives him, she trips out of the house, pitcher in hand, and proceeds to fill it. Inclining his head, the *Steckelmann* entreats a drink from her pitcher. "Most willingly," she replies; and he moistens his lips with the water. If the offer is well received, she fills the wooden trough below the fountain, and invites the ambassador to let his thirsty beast drink also. If not, she returns to the house without another word. After the animal has drunk, the *Steckelmann* takes from his valise the presents destined for the modern Rebekah, a piece of linen, a gown, and a kerchief for the neck, and presents them to the maiden. He then asks if there is room in her father's house. She answers in the affirmative, and hastens to inform her parents of the expected visitor. Her father goes out to receive him. "Enter, thou blessed of the Lord," he says. "Why standest thou without? Our house is open to thee, and we will shelter thy beast also." The *Steckelmann* alights, and enters. Food is placed before him, but he refuses to taste a morsel till his errand is made known. Then he formally demands the girl's hand, mentioning the name of her lover, and all details necessary on such an occasion. The parents answer, "It is God who has sent you. It is he who has put the words in your mouth. How can we but respect his will? We must, however, consult our daughter; for we cannot marry our child against her wishes."

The maiden, who has retired to another room, is now recalled, and asked if she accepts the proposed husband. With modest timidity, she replies, "I will follow him under the roof where he dwells." A repast is then served, after which the *Steckelmann* returns to give an account of his mission.

The burial ceremonies of the Men-