

nonites are very simple. As soon as one of their number has ceased to breathe, the watchers kneel down, and commit his soul to God. The body is then prepared for burial, and laid in a black coffin. All night long, friends watch around the coffin, and, from hour to hour kneel down and commend the departed spirit to the goodness of the Almighty. On the next day, the whole community assembles; the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians is read. The coffin is placed upon a wooden frame, and borne to the grave by four young men, while the members of the church follow, singing hymns. At the grave prayer is offered, the body is lowered into its last resting-place, and the earth smoothed over it. No memorial, even of the simplest kind, marks the spot, and the grass and flowers springing up soon obliterate every trace. It is not neglect or forgetfulness of the dead. It is rather a conviction of the nothingness of all earthly things, a desire to turn the thoughts away from the decaying body to the spirit which has burst the bonds that held it down to earth.

There is but one penalty against church discipline—exclusion. While it lasts, the excommunicated person cannot eat or drink with his own family, vote, or take the communion. But even here, the reformation of the offender is the aim of the sentence. Should he manifest true penitence, he is joyfully received again.

In politics the Mennonites take no share, believing that the fate of nations is in the hands of the Almighty, who directs it as he will. They pay implicit obedience to government, praying for their rulers, whoever they may be. In the affairs of the outside world they take no interest, and read no books except such as relate to their own sect. Their religious belief does not require them to live apart from the world, yet, forbidden by their rules to share in many of its customs and amusements, they prefer to live in communities by themselves. Though seldom rich, poverty is almost unknown. Their benevolence toward the afflicted is worthy of all praise. Nor are their charities confined to their own poor. To all in want and misery, they stretch out a helping hand; and, though their kindness is often abused, it is never wearied.

Appeal to the civil tribunals is forbidden by their principles. If a debtor not a Mennonite, refuses to satisfy the claims of one of their number, and persists in his refusals after his unjust behavior has been fully set forth to him a free gift is made of the amount in dispute. "Peace and concord," they say, are worth more than the transitory things of this world.

If the dispute is between Mennonites, a council is held of the three Servants, before whom both parties appear. Their decision, from which there is no appeal, is submitted to without a murmur.

A brief sketch is all our space allows of the principles and practices of this long-maligned sect. Even now, though no longer subject to tyranny and outrage, its good name still suffers from the stains cast upon it in days when toleration was the worst of crimes, and sectary was a name of infamy. It is time that the baselessness of these calumnies should be acknowledged, and justice done to a body of Christians, who though mistaken in some of their religious views and usages, have always honestly sought to carry out to their fullest extent the precepts and spirit of the Gospel.—Christian Union.

For the Christian Messenger.

THE CLOSING YEAR.

The good old year, in tone sincere, Addresses even you; Can you say good by, without a sigh, Or having a short review? I've run my race, I've filled my place, What have I been to you? Oh speak to my heart before we part, And you greet the Happy New.

I brought you grief and then relief, I brought you shine and shade, I brought you tears and many fears, I brought you joys that fade; I brought you hours, in summer bowers, That were too sweet to last; In memory's cell you've kept them well—Rich treasures of the past.

Now have you faith in the word which saith; All things work together For good, to those, whose hearts enclose, A love for the Blessed Saviour. It was not best that you shall rest Where sunbeams ever play; I snatched the jewel, you called me cruel The good you'll see some day.

If all your dreams and earthly schemes And wants were gratified; For more you'd sigh to please the eye; You'd not be satisfied. Say e're I go you will bestow A friend-ship worth receiving. "Love scarce is love that never knows The sweetness of forgiving."

Go greet the New, but keep in view A day is yet to come; When talents lent, will all be spent, Your time for labor done. And now I go and who will know What I have been to Thee; But one great day, alone can say What you have been to me. A. P. B.

Digby.

The Christian Messenger.

Halifax, N. S., January 1, 1873.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

"A Happy New Year" to all our readers. We shall do all in our power to make it so to them.

New Year's Day is full of reminiscences. In the earlier ages when the world had counted but six centuries, on the morning of New Year's Day Noah looked out from his refuge, and saw the earth ready again for himself and family to inhabit, and proceeded to break up the covering of the ark he had built under divine direction. They might well have wished each other "a Happy New Year," as they emerged from their close confinement, and thought of their wondrous deliverance from the watery grave in which all their fellowmen had perished.

Again, eight or nine hundred years later, on a New Year's Day, the aged prophet is busily engaged with his obedient priests, all occupied in rearing the sacred edifice of the materials already fitted and prepared. With alacrity they obey the orders given, and to them the day must necessarily have been full of the deepest interest as they had spent a year in preparing the materials for the commencement of its erection. It must have become to them a Happy New Year's Day.

Again, in the days of good king Hezekiah, on New Year's Day by the king's orders a company of priests commenced the work of cleansing the house of the Lord, and continued at the "business" (see marginal reading) for a full week before they came to the porch of the house. They finished their work in sixteen days.

On New Year's Day we are told the old Romans sacrificed to Janus a cake of new sifted meal, with salt, incense, and wine; and all the mechanics began something of their art of trade; the men of letters did the same as to books, poems, &c., and the consuls, though chosen before, took the chair and entered upon their office on this day. The origin of New Year's Gifts is attributed to Titus Tatius, king of the Sabines, who, having considered as a good omen a present of some branches of a sacred tree, consecrated to Strenia, received on the first day of the new year, author zed the custom afterwards, and gave such gifts the name of Strenæ 747. B. C.

There is some incongruity in recognizing December the 25th as the birth day of the Lord Jesus, and then commencing the year (Anno Domini, the year of our Lord) on the 1st of January. The year was first made to commence on the 1st day of January in the 4714th year of the Julian period. The changes which have been since made, were for the purpose of making the length of the year more exactly correct so as to accord precisely with the time of the earth passing around the sun. The appointment of Christmas on the 25th of December was of more recent date.

It would require more space than we can now give to describe fully the "Why" and "Because" of these arrangements.

1872--1873.

Another volume of the records of this world has been closed and laid aside. 1872 with all its striking events has come to an end, and a new cycle this day opens upon us. This world has travelled around its orbit of three hundred millions of miles during the year, and proceeds again on its course with like regularity, leading us to imagine that all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. This motion of the earth around its great central orb—the sun, is measured out, month after month, bringing us into the successive seasons, each of which contributes its own peculiar blessings, and places before us special duties and obligations. But whence

are we being carried by these years that crowd each other along in Time's pathway. We are able ourselves to trace but a very few years back, but, by an examination of the past volumes of the records of this world, we may know something of what has been said and done by the nations and men of the past. By comparison and conjecture we may suppose something of what is to take place in the affairs of mankind in the future, but we are often taught that the limits of human foresight are very contracted, and the wisest of men are no more able to see down the vista of coming years than those of most limited capacity. Each member of the human family is working out some destiny for himself, and it becomes us to gather up all that we may from every source, and enquire from time to time what are the probabilities of our future in this life, and in that which is to come. New Year's Day is perhaps the best one in the year for such considerations, and one that offers a better opportunity of entering upon any new mode of operation. Each of the three hundred and sixty-six days of 1872 brought its own blessings, and left its own record of how they were valued and improved.

On close examination of the words spoken, acts performed, and the motives by which they were prompted, during each day, would probably shew many blots and errors which need erasure and correction. Some we may suppose, affecting ourselves only, others we perceive were more or less injuring our fellow men, and others again dishonoring to God. Have these corrections and erasures from time to time followed? Has application been made to the Saviour from whom alone we may obtain forgiveness and peace? What is to be the writing in the new volume—1873? How are its daily pages to be filled up? Is the past experience to be repeated? Are sin, shame, sorrow and forgiveness, to follow in like order as heretofore, or are there to be advances made on former experience? Now is the time to decide these questions, and by that means secure a more satisfactory result and review at the close of the present year. We have spoken these words to our christian readers, who know the source of strength and are accustomed to apply to the Friend of Sinners in all times of adversity and prosperity, and in the future prospect feel the fact that they have in such a Friend, a tower of strength. If any of our readers have not given Him their confidence, and feel that they are reconciled to him and prepared to accept his precepts for their rule of life, let them this day adopt the resolution to do so, and begin with the year. Then we can assure them that it will be to them a Happy New Year.

WEEK OF PRAYER, 1873.

In our issue of Oct. 30th we gave the circular of the Evangelical Alliance, with their invitation to observe the first week of the New Year, as a week of Special Prayer, together with the list of subjects suggested for each day's meditation, exhortation and prayer. We scarcely need repeat them in full. In brief we may however mention that they were—

Sunday Jan. 5.—The foundation, security, and universal extension of the Christian Church.

Monday, 6.—Devout Acknowledgment. Remembrance of God's mercies to the nation, to families, and to churches—confession of sin, &c.

Tuesday, 7.—Prayer for Christian churches, &c.

Wednesday, 8.—For families; for schools, colleges and universities, &c.

Thursday, 9.—For nations; for the maintenance of peace; for the removal of intemperance, &c.

Friday, 10.—For mankind; for the circulation of the Holy Scriptures, &c.

Saturday, 11.—For Sunday schools; for missionary, tract and other religious societies, &c.

Sunday, 12.—Sermons: "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory." Amen, and amen.

The following are the arrangements for the city of Halifax:—

SUNDAY, Jan 5th—Prayer Meeting at 4½ o'clock, conducted by the Young Men's Christian Association.

Meetings will be held every week-day morning at 9½ o'clock, in Argye Hall.

Evening Meetings will be held from 7½ till 9 o'clock, as follows:—

MONDAY.—Grafton Street Wesleyan Church, and North Baptist Church.

TUESDAY.—St. John's Church (Presbyterian); Granville Street (Baptist), and Richmond Church.

WEDNESDAY.—St. Matthew's Church; Poplar Grove Church; Kay Street Church.

THURSDAY.—Fort Masey Church, and Brunswick Street Church.

FRIDAY.—St. Andrew's Church; Chalmers' Church; Charles Street Church.

SATURDAY.—Salem Church, at 3 o'clock, P. M.

SUNDAY 12th.—Closing Meeting, conducted by the Young Men's Christian Association.

We go to press as usual this week; but without knowing when the roads will be in a condition affording prospect of the Messenger reaching our subscribers. We are hoping each day that a thaw will come sufficient to clear the track. Perhaps there is no class of men more to be pitied than the railway officials. Every body thinks that something might be done more than is done to expedite the progress of the trains, whilst the men are using their endeavours, often at the risk of their lives to overcome the obstacles. We fear that the frost having come on so early may last some considerable time yet, and produce more serious distress than we have yet heard of.

GRANVILLE STREET CHURCH. Donation.—Several members of the Granville Street Church and Congregation made a visit on Christmas Day to the Rev. E. M. Saunders, with a donation from themselves and a number of other members. With some sent in on the previous day it amounted to about \$200. The interview was a pleasant one to both pastor and people, and afforded an opportunity for mutual expressions of esteem and attachment.

BAPTISM IN THE TIBER.

The following is the substance of communications from Rev. B. H. Tucker forwarded to us by a friend with a request for publication:

Soon after my arrival in Rome, I sought and found the acquaintance of our brother, Rev. W. N. Cote, missionary to Rome, of the Southern Baptist Convention. One of his first acts of hospitality was to conduct me to one of his religious meetings and there I had the pleasure in this superstitious, smitten and priest-ridden city, of sitting among brethren of our own faith and order, just such as I left at home. By invitation I spoke a few words to the brethren in my own language, brother Cote promptly translating it, sentence by sentence, into Italian; and thus on a very small basis of fact, yet, truthfully I can say with the Apostle that I have preached the Gospel to them that are at Rome also. And here I may say, although it is a digression, that in this great city of most wonderful sights and most thrilling associations, nothing has impressed me so much as the fact that I tread the ground that Paul trod; that I breathe the air that he breathed, and that I mingle among and pray with and preach to the descendants of the very same people to whom the Apostle ministered, and to whom the Epistle to the Romans was addressed.

The services of the evening were mainly conducted by a person whom at the time I did not know, but whose history has since, in some very important particulars, become inseparably connected with mine. As he spoke in the Italian language, I could understand nothing of his discourse except that occasionally I could catch the meaning of a word from its resemblance to Latin, and in this way I learned something of the drift of his remarks. I observed, however, that he spoke fluently and forcibly, seeming to have full possession of himself like a practiced public speaker. His hearers were deeply attentive, and, not being educated up to our ideas of propriety, would occasionally interrupt him with exclamations of approval.

On inquiring into his history, I found that, like all other Italians, he had been brought up a Romanist; but that at an early age, he had been led by a Roman priest, who has since become and is now a Protestant minister, to search the sacred Scriptures for divine knowledge. The result of his investigations was that, under the influence of the Spirit, he became a Christian. Still, as might have been expected, his knowledge of truth was very imperfect. This was some fifteen years ago. During that interval he has spent most of his time in Northern Africa, where, in addition to other occupations, he labored as a sort of lay-evangelist under the appointment of a religious body in England. As soon as Rome was free he experienced a great desire to labor among his countrymen; he accordingly returned to this, his native city, and then soon formed the acquaintance of our brother Cote, attached himself to his mission, and assisted him in his work.

Yet, all this while, owing chiefly to want of earlier proper instructions, he had remained unbaptized, and having recently received full light on the subject, was desiring that ordination at the very time of my visit. By request of brother Cote, and with the consent of the candidate, I agreed to baptize him. Before administering the ordinance, the candidate was carefully examined by me in the presence of brother Cote, and also of brother M. T. Yates, missionary of the Southern Board to China, who happened to be here on a visit at the same time with myself. The church was not called together, because circumstances rendered it almost impossible, and there were strong reasons for avoiding delay.

There are plenty of fountains in the city which would answer the purpose admirably well, but to use one of these would be to provoke assault. But there was the Tiber! For our purposes this river is not very inviting, as its banks are muddy and the stream rapid and violent. Still we resolved to try it. We did not wish to attract public attention lest we might seem to be inviting aggression, still we took no special measures for concealment. Brother Cote, brother Yates, the candidate and myself, repaired to the banks of the Tiber near the city of Rome, and there, in broad daylight, under the very shadow of the Vatican, on Thursday the 21st of March, 1872, in the river Tiber, Giovanni B. Gioja, on a profession of his faith in Jesus Christ, was scripturally baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. As the candidate rose from the water he exclaimed, "I thank God that I have been buried with Christ in baptism." God's name be praised, echoed our hearts, and the very waves seemed to kiss the banks as if they were glad. Certainly this was the first time for many centuries, and perhaps since the days of the Apostles, that the Tiber has been stirred as the Jordan was by John the Baptist. And is it possible that this stream, which Satan has bound these thousand years, is free? And are God's people free? Has Babylon fallen indeed? Let the very waters rejoice! Let every drop of that baptismal tide be carried to the sea, and then commingling with the ocean, spread the glad news till the whole world shall hear the tale of liberty. My figures and my fancy, I know, are not the best, but my brethren can easily believe me when I tell them that on that day and hour, on that striking epoch in religious history, my heart was impressed as it never was before and can never be again.

There were, too, some pleasant little peculiarities in the circumstances. The candidate's name, spelt Gioja, is pronounced Joy-ah, and is an Italian word meaning joy; and thus in his baptism there was literal, if not figurative, joy to the wave, as well as joy to the world. It was on the 21st day of March, the day of the Equinox, when days and nights are equal and the heavens and the earth are in balance; the vernal Equinox when Spring, laden with flowers, comes with her promises of hope; one witness was from China that the other side of the world might hear the fact from one who saw it; another was from Rome, another quarter of the globe, and the administrator, to make the third point, without which a circle could not be defined, was from far off America. Just before the ordinance was administered, a steambot on the Tiber came in sight. It suggested that the angel of civilization had stirred the water, that this long afflicted people might be healed. The spot where the baptism took place was near the Ponte Molle; the very spot where Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, so-called, caused Maxentius to be drowned. If that was a Christian victory in name, was not this one in reality? But let these pleasanties pass. The Tiber is not a suitable place for baptism. It can seldom be used without danger, and in the case of females, never. It is to be hoped that speedily a church will be built and furnished with a baptistery, where the ordinance can be administered without inconvenience; "decently and in order."

BAPTIST ORDINATION IN ROME, ITALY.

Brother Giovanni B. Gioja, of whom I spoke in my previous article, and who was baptized on Thursday, March 21st, was ordained to the work of the Gospel ministry on the following Sunday. The brethren at home may for a moment fear that we violated the Apostolic injunction which says; "Lay hands suddenly on no man," but if they will be as deliberate in their judgment as we were in ours, there

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