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Poetry.

Motto for the New Year.

"The Lord thinketh upon me." Psa. 17.
Upon me! let these words, now the year is commencing,
Repeat their glad music in hearts that are sad,
O waken the echoes of trust and assurance,
And stay till "the mourners in Zion" are glad.

Upon me, upon me," though so lowly and worthless,
So small and despised by the children of men;
Yet the Lord is concerned with my least undertaking,
And ponders my "goings" again and again.

That One is in Heaven who thinketh of me:
Who, though man may forget, hath "my times" in His keeping—
That nothing can happen which is not to be.

"Upon me!" Yes, these words shall ring on in their sweetness
To gladden each day of this forthcoming year
When an anthem of joy; that the Lord in His glory
Is thinking of each of His needy ones here.

Ay, so "thinking" that nothing will happen to harm them;
So "thinking" that nothing can ever "go wrong!"
O Lord, give us all the assurance to feel this,
That life may be ever a "thanksgiving song!"

CHARLOTTE MURRAY.

The Procession of the Months.

On New Year's Eve I sat me down, and looked
Into the clear blank air, wherein anon I saw,
As moving visions, these—the Months.

Bleak January, stern, and hard, and cold,
Inexorable vanguard of the year.

His brother following close, with head bent down,
And eyes avert, with lagging painful tread.

Then March—the young and lusty. In his breath
Is life—full, daring, fetterless, and wild,
Eager and fatal as a thoughtless love.

Passionate April—girl-child of the year,
Weeping her heart out on the lap of Spring.

Until the May-time cometh, flowery-fair,
And all the earth smiles back the smile of heaven.

June—throbbing, tremendous with coming joy,
Her rose bud pulses thrilling all the air.

And rich July, oppressed with empery,
Bathes in a flood of gold, and taketh rest
By starlight, with low sighs and murmurings.

August, queen-regnant, born unto the throne,
Holding her state with bland, assured content,
Gracious and regal-generous, large of heart.

September—gentle matron—with sweet eyes
And a low voice that penetrates, persuades,
And looks of love, and tender, guiding hands.

October, with a calm and thoughtful brow,
But quick decision in the look of him,
And a great will that may not be gained.

Sober November cometh, veiled in mist,
And weeps, lamenting o'er the faded earth.

And then the last—December—takes his rank
Submissive, and contented to be old,
Grateful for unthought rays of happiness,
And ever mindful of the holy time
That cometh towards the end.

So they passed on—
The Months, in long procession, glad to go
Unto the goal of all things—even to God.
M. J. J.

Religious.

A Short Sermon for the New Year.

BY REV. WILLIAM LAMSON.

"Forgetting the things which are behind."—Phil. iii. 13.

I like a Scripture word for New Year, and this one especially. It is an invitation to turn over a new leaf, as the expression often is. There are some things to be forgotten; better that they should be. It is a Divine, not a human counsel to do this. What, then, shall I forget?

1. Forget your sins. What, forget my sins? Ought they not especially to be remembered? If they have not been remembered and confessed, then most assuredly this should be done at once. The duty is imperative and pressing. Nothing should have the precedence. But I am speaking to the Christian, to one who has confessed and sorrowed over his sins, and to whom God has been faithful and just to forgive. Now, to him I say, Forget your confessed and forgiven sins. Do not, I entreat you, carry the load, or any part of the load, over the threshold of a new year. Jesus does not wish you should. He has borne all those sins once for all. Why, then, should you bear them? It is neither good for you nor pleasing to God. He is willing to forget them: "Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more." So entire is the Divine goodness that it includes Divine forgetfulness. You, then, may safely forget what is thus forgiven, Nay, you cannot safely do otherwise.

2. Forget your Christian experience. Ten, twenty, or more years ago, you met with a change, which was called a Christian experience. If genuine, it was the greatest and most blessed fact in your life. But that is past. Are you remembering it and living on it to-day? If so, you are sadly misusing it. That was only the birth-hour of a new life, designed to continue and grow till death. Do not go back and recall that infant life as the foundation of present hope. It is not what you felt and were then, but what you feel and are now, that decides your standing and prospects. Forget to-day the experiences of the past, except so far as they help you the better to use the present, and press forward to something higher and richer, you have not yet obtained. There is more in Christ than you have yet found. There are unsearchable riches in Him. There are experiences of those dead and of those now living that far surpass any which you have had. Reach forward to the unattained. Follow thou the Master whithersoever He leadeth thee.

3. Forget your grievances. Have you endured wrongs, unkindnesses, during the departed year? Who of us has not? Offences do come, will come. Does the memory of these still live in your breast and stir your resentment? Do you talk of righteous indignation? O friend, it is probably a misuse of the word *righteous*. Better strive after and think of, a righteous forgetfulness. You do wish to be forgiven. But the very condition of the Divine forgiveness is a spirit of forgiveness in us. If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father in heaven forgive your trespasses. How can you, while carrying the irritating memory of wrongs suffered, pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors?" You cannot. Empty your mind of the memories of injury and wrong endured and go into the new year bearing resentment towards no human being.

Brethren," said the noble Paul, "I count not myself to have apprehended, laid hold on; but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forth unto the things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the heavenly calling of God in Christ Jesus." Let this, reader, be our Scripture word for the New Year—leaving the dead past, and reaching forth unto the living future. The ultimate goal is not yet reached.

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Numbering our Days.

BY REV. J. P. ROLLO.

Some one has said that man is the only animal who can tell what o'clock it is. Certainly, of all the creatures who tread with him the highway of life, he is the only one who can measure the steps. This is his high prerogative, that he can enter the watch-tower from which the future as well as the past can be surveyed with a glance that reveals the true value of the present. Surely it is thus signified that time was meant to be the servant—the property—of that wonderful being who can measure it up as a tradesman does his stock, or a landlord his acres.

Yet is this a task which man cannot perform aright without help from on high? Though the sum is at the best not a very formidable one, it is an ill one to reckon; and increase of knowledge does not seem to diminish the difficulty. By the unaided effort of his mind man can count the very stars, and measure the vast spaces that divide them. There is hardly any calculation, either of time or space, that is too great for him; but to measure his own few fleeting days he requires the help of God.

For somehow the days will not stand still to be counted. So silently, so swiftly, so imperceptibly, do they glide into one another, that to reckon them is like counting the bubbles that drift down the rapids in quick succession, or the snowflakes that melt in the stream. As we attempt the task a strange drowsiness comes over us. We seem to be counting in a sort of walking dream, one half conscious of what we are about.

And as we go on reckoning, the sleepiness grows upon us, till at length we drop off into the general unconsciousness of our race to the rapid flight of time.

For though we talk about the value of time, we do not number our days as we do our bank-notes, because they are not so real to us as these are. Time passes us like the viewless wind, which is only seen in its effects. We move through it as amidst the insubstantial air. Its weeks and years steal past us noiselessly, like ghosts gliding through an empty space. It seems often impossible to lay hold of them as we are wont to do the things we wish to number.

But the God who gave us the ability to reckon, can teach us to number our days. And the method of instruction which He pursues is indicated in the psalm which has suggested this paper. He would cause us to number back that we may learn to number forward,—reckon up the days that are gone, that we may correctly estimate the value of the days that are to come. It is notorious that the old man's estimate of life is very different from that entertained by the young; and this simply because the former has actually traversed its days and taken stock of their opportunities, while the latter has done neither. Hence it is that while to him who is entering upon it the days of a life-time seem to be innumerable, to him who is leaving it, even in a ripe old age, his portion of time seems short as a watch in the night, and swiftly passing as a flood that sweeps all before it. He who would rightly sum up his days must therefore take his stand with the old man. As this is the estimate of his life-time to which he will yet be driven, God would have him voluntarily adopt it now, when it will be no mere melancholy retrospect to him, but a living truth whose force will be felt every day of his life.

For the numbering of our days is a

noble tonic to the soul. It braces up all that is good and manly within us. It arrests us amidst our foolish and ignorant wastefulness of time. It cuts short our selfish indulgences and puts a limit to our profitless pleasures. It tightens every string of our spiritual being, and greatly helps us to gather up our energies and apply them to noble uses. For while, alas! it is but too well known that a man may accurately number his days only to extract as much wealth, worldly gain, or pleasure from them as possible, or that his spirit may be overwhelmed and his energies paralysed by the appalling brevity of time, the good results of this course are at least equally notorious. Few men have begun to be really wise until they began to number their days; and the wisest have been the most ready to acknowledge the spur of this great incentive. Jonah led the Ninevites to repentance by teaching them to number their days; and it is difficult to see how any man could take home the message they received without following the course which they pursued. Every student who has resolved to prepare for an examination, every tradesman who has pledged himself to execute a piece of work, every man who has undertaken any task whatever which is to be accomplished within a stated time, knows what an indescribable effect is produced upon him by the numbering of the days which stand between him and the end he has in view. How much greater therefore the influence upon us of the numbering of the days of our life, which, fleeting as they are, are sufficient to determine and to mould our eternity.

On the other hand, the man who has never numbered his days will hardly be able either to redeem or to possess his time, but will be himself the property of time and the creature of circumstances. Instead of taking time by the forelock, and assuming the reins of his life, he will put his neck under the yoke, and be driven on by the "victor hours" which he might have used as divinely appointed ministers working together for his good.

Perhaps it is also not unworthy of notice, that it is the *days* we are called upon to number, and not merely the years. It is not only the passing year that is to solemnise our minds, but the passing day; since every fresh day comes to us from our God, laden with its own treasures and opportunities, and returns to Him with its own separate record of eternal gain or irreparable loss. We make most of the years; and the scriptures, of the days. But the Bible is right. You may lose sight of the days beneath the cloak of the years; but when you secure the days, you are sure of the years. Take care of the days, like the pence; and the years, like the pounds, will take care of themselves.

Never was there an age in which we more needed the help of Heaven to enable us to number our days than this. There is nothing which is more repugnant to our generation than the thought of the brevity of life. Never perhaps was there a time in which death was so studiously ignored, and all that suggests the thought of it more carefully kept out of sight, and in which therefore the ancient prayer was more needed by which these remarks have been suggested.

Training Converts.

BY THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

A very large proportion of members in our churches count for very little except upon the muster roll. When that roll is called for practical service they do not answer "here." The lamentable statistics of contributions—for example, only eighty cents annually per member to the great work of Home Missions—show how small are the pecuniary gifts of these comatose Christians. The thin attendance at prayer-meetings in so many churches—the fewness of those who take part in them, or in any kind of personal effort for souls and the spread of Christ's Kingdom—are illustrations of the same fact. A

large portion of the power in the church is a latent power. The stream is diverted upon the water-wheels of the world, or else runs to waste; less than half of it turned upon spiritual machinery. One reason, among many, is, that new converts are not trained into Christian activity from the start.

In a recent article on "Early Conversion" we spoke of the training of young converts in the Sunday-school and Bible class. But many converts to Christ are still in the morning of life, although they may have outgrown the Sunday-school. Under thirty years of age the habits of individuals are easily moulded; and during the thirty years after that, they ought to be set to work, for their Master. The true time to enlist a Christian in active service is when he enlists in the visible army of Christ by a public confession of Christ. If a new convert does not open his lips in some devotional meeting during the first thirty days, he is apt to remain tongue-tied for life. If he or she is not called into some sort of service, then doth he or she become a drone in the hive. One of the most effectual methods that I know of for training new converts is by the agency of a "Young People's Association," organized in the church and under the oversight of the pastor. There has been such an association in the church which I have the honor to serve for about thirteen years. Sometimes its membership runs as high as four hundred.

It embraces three classes of members—active, associate, and honorary. Any member of our church between the ages of fifteen and forty-five may be chosen an "active" member of the association. Any person of good moral character may become an associate member entitled to all privileges of that of holding office. The fee of membership is fifty cents annually, and ten dollars secures a membership for life. The objects of the association are to hold weekly devotional meetings, to promote social intercourse, to visit the sick, to search out and bring in young people, to labor for their conversion, and to do whatever will develop the spiritual life of new converts. There is a "Devotional Committee," which has charge of the Monday evening meeting, which is held in the houses of the congregation. The Committee must select the house, have it announced from the pulpit, and see to it that the camp-stools and hymn-books are taken to the said house in season.

That meeting lasts just one hour. The leader of the service is allowed to occupy fifteen minutes in opening the exercises. As soon as possible after a person is converted, he is requested to take charge of the meeting; this breaks him into the harness at once. No one is allowed to occupy more than three minutes in an address or a prayer. At the close of the service, a half-hour is spent in giving introductions and in social intercourse. In pleasant weather we expect the house to be crowded; but we have seldom had the spiritual thermometer so high as to pack a house on a stormy evening. Only a pleasure party or a political caucus can do that.

In these social meetings all are made welcome, and new converts are encouraged to take part. There is a freedom felt in a private house which cannot be felt by a beginner in the public lecture-room of the church. Most persons of modesty and common sense are apt to feel a certain diffidence in speaking or praying for the first time. Some of our most effective speakers made an unpromising start, and had one or two break-downs before they could (as the oarsmen say) "pull themselves together." But it is not simply a public speaking and praying service into which the Association trains its members. They are organized for various kinds of work. There is a Visiting Committee to look after the sick. There is an "Entertainment Committee" who arrange music, readings, and other pleasant features for a monthly sociable—to which the whole congregation are invited. The monthly