

THE PASSING YEAR.

Stay yet, my friends, a moment stay,
 Stay, for the good old year,
 So long companion of our way,
 Shakes hands and leaves us here!
 Oh, stay, oh stay,
 One little hour, and then a. a.!

The kindly year, his liberal hands
 Have lavished all his store,
 And shall we turn from where he stands
 Because he gives no more?
 Oh, stay, oh stay,
 One grateful hour, and then away!

Even while we sing he smiles his last
 And leaves our sphere behind;
 The good old year is with the past—
 Oh, be the new as kind!
 Oh, stay, oh stay,
 One parting strain, and then away!
 —William Cullen Bryant.

New Year's Eve Reflections.

New Year's eve is the favorite time for making good resolutions, which unfortunately in the majority of instances are only made to be broken. But where the need for making such resolves is felt, whether kept or broken, the good intention is in too many cases regarded as a sufficient excuse for greater indulgence in the meantime. Such a weakness is very human, and even good men are not exempt from the folly of drawing on the future where they have no assets. Readers of Dickens' "Bleak House" can doubtless recall the case of the character who gave himself much credit for thrift and was more hopeful when on any particular day he spent foolishly a little less than he had previously thrown away.

He also was drawing on the future when he imagined he would become rich, because he was less of a spend-thrift than he had been before.

It is natural when passing one of the milestones on the journey of life that even the unreflective should become thoughtful and seriously ponder upon the evanescence of life. The knell of the closing year is apt to suggest some very serious thoughts and sad memories, and the midnight hour that ushers in a new year not infrequently brings intruding ghosts from the realm of the past.

There is room at such a season as this for something else besides hopes. There is a feeling of uncertainty as to the future. And especially in the case of those who have passed the middle milestone of life, who live more in the past than in the present and future, there is a predominant feeling of sadness which nothing can relieve but the consciousness of a heart reverent toward God and loving toward man. While making good resolves for the new year let us realize the importance of reforming at once and not be guilty of the folly of making a possible future goodness an excuse for present evil.

A Teutonic Custom

German children during the interval from St. Martin's to the Epiphany in Mecklenburg and in Irkermark bind up bunches of broom with which in spring, when the cattle first leave the farm, they sprinkle the threshold of the stable. They bind up fruit trees with straw. In the country of Grolitz they place bundles of hay under the table, and the New Year's guests place their feet upon them. In Polonia they strew the table with straw, and the dishes and bottles seem to gleam amid the lights, as it were in a great manger.—San Francisco Wave.

The Meaning of New Year's.

The custom of making a day of celebration of the first day of the year is as old as civilization. There have been differences of opinion regarding the manner in which the day should be celebrated, as well as varied opinions regarding the date on which the year properly begins, but there seems to have been an unanimous understanding among the ancient nations that New Year's day was the day of all days when business should be suspended while the world made merry. The ancient Romans chose to begin their year in March. Christianity, famous from its birth for overturning the established usages of time, has the idea of making a distinct break between the old and the new year, to be signalized by solemn services, but so widely separated were the leaders of the new religion and so difficult was it in those days to get together to arrange the religious almanac that there continued to be a great diversity of ideas regarding the exact date when the new year's inauguration should begin. It is a fact that New Year's day has been solemnized on Christmas day, while so mixed were the leaders of the ancient Christian church regarding the proper time to begin the year that it was celebrated variously on Easter day and on March 1. It was not until the sixteenth century that by universal consent New Year's day was fixed for Jan. 1.

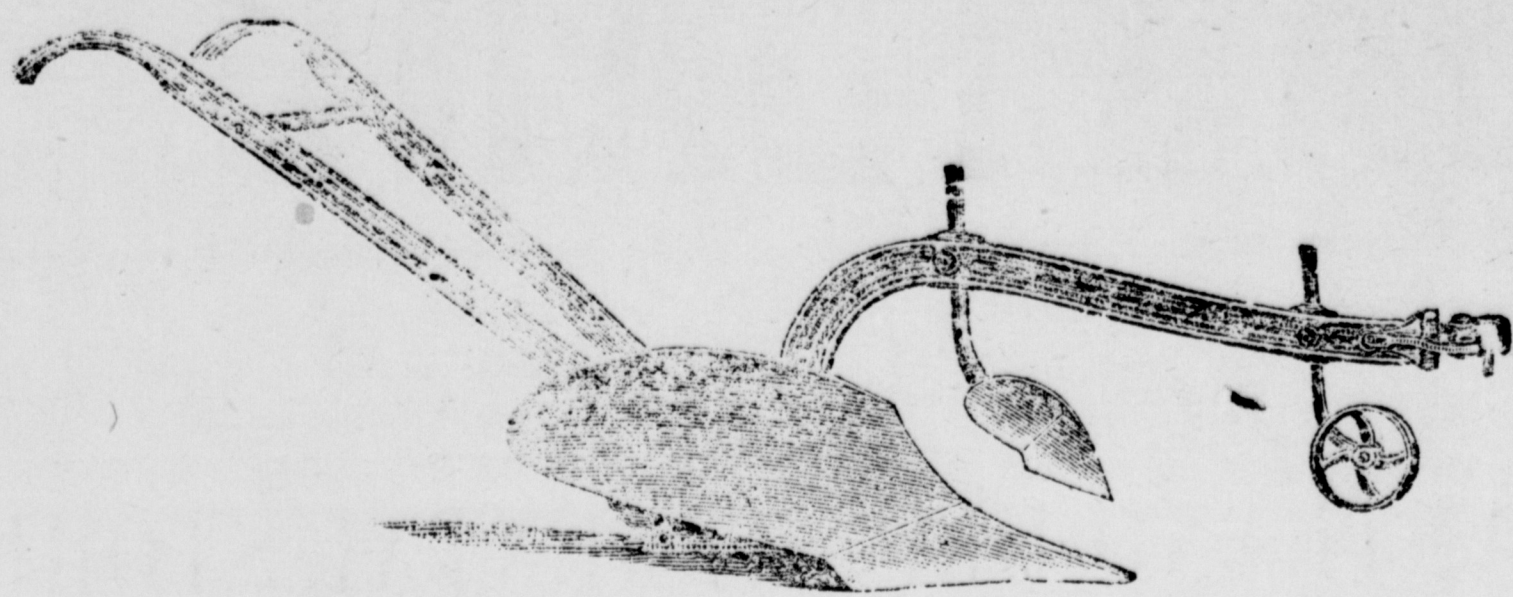
New Year's day has always been a high holiday, in spite of the efforts of certain stern old fathers of the church, notably Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, Peter Chrysologus and others to make it a day on which fasting or prayer should take the place of hilarity. A compromise was effected by which part of the day was given up to feasting and part to prayer, and this has prevailed to the present day.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

A Thought For New Year's.

It is a blessed provision of the almanac to have a new year come around annually. It gives to countless numbers of persons an opportunity to indulge in their darling vice by stifling their consciences with the promise of turning over a new leaf on New Year's day. Yet even if one does not live up to one's programme of purity is it not better to have resolved and failed than never to have resolved at all?

A New Year's Lesson.

Happy is the man whose life is so filled with worthy achievements and truths that he can come into a new year thankful and courageous. To many the experiences of the past are humiliating. The discovery of weakness should not be discouraging, but should lead to a nobler life in the future. The cause of defeat is the absence of that life which is so masterful that it can control circumstances and make life's success and adversities yield nourishment to the higher life of man. God has established the equilibrium of a man's spirit at the point of worthy living, and no rest can be found in the presence of the past or in contemplation of the future unless the life of true purpose shall be ours.—Chicago Tribune



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