

Messenger and Visitor

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—A HAPPY AND A PROSPEROUS NEW-YEAR DAY,
it be to each and every reader of the MESSENGER
AND VISITOR.

The New Year.

In the date line of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR this week there appears a new number, indicating that, since the last preceding issue of the paper, we have passed the arbitrary line which, in the world's reckoning of time separates one year from another. It is 1899, now in our calendars. The century has grown very old. With two more years its number will be complete. But meanwhile the world's endless toil and endeavor will go on, and much that seems important in the affairs of men will doubtless come to pass, while the earth shall be making those two journeys round the sun. Every year has its surprises, we cannot tell what even a day may bring forth. But all the record and experience of the past teach us to expect that good and evil will be found, that more or less of pain as well as of pleasure will enter into the lot of all. Some will enjoy in this new year a large measure of prosperity and happiness, and some will be sorely pressed with adversity and sorrow. But it is God's world, and those who will shall have his guidance and protection as they make their pilgrimage, and

"It is better to walk with God in the dark
Than to walk alone in the light."

It seems but yesterday since we began to write 1898 in the date line of our letters and we had scarcely become well used to the calendar, when lo! aro her comes to take its place. We are informed that the year is dead and we are expected with all the rest of the world, to hasten to pay our respects to its successor. Ah, well, we must recognize the powers that be. The king is dead; long live the king. We have our strong attachments to the year that is past, we may feel inclined to linger with its joy or with its sorrow, but a voice that comes from beyond the centuries calls us onward. This present year of 1899 is God's year, it is the year in which he means us to live. Let us not try to keep our tents pitched in 1898, while all the world goes marching on into 1899. Let us not resolve to make for ourselves a hermitage in the nineteenth century, while the world is moving forward with God into the twentieth. He is God not of the dead but of the living, and the present is the theatre of life. Let no one fear that this world is slipping beyond the watchtower and control of its Creator. Let no devout soul fear that God is less the dwelling-place of his people in this generation than in any that has been. It is well for us certainly to carry with us, as we move forward, all that we have gathered of valuable knowledge and experience, but let us not think that we must carry the Most High with us into the future, as the pagan worshippers of old carried their household gods with them in their migrations. For God has his home in all the centuries. His tabernacle abides with men. With the passing years and centuries the thought of man reaches out into wider and wider horizons; but that thought does not outreach the God of Moses and of Isaiah. He is ever vaster than man's comprehension, and his glorious presence fills and infinitely overflows the grandest sanctuary which the most devout and enlightened worshipper can build. He inhabits eternity. If we look backward God is there, and if we turn our gaze to the future, behold, he is there. But let us not think that God is to be apprehended only, as we go back to bring him out of the dim past, or as we reach forward to find him in the unknown future, for God is here, very near to us, in this every day present in which we are living, though, our minds being filled with worldly thoughts and selfish ambitions, like Jacob at Bethel, we perceive not that we are in a house of God. But, here and now, God is

"Closer to us than thinking,
And nearer than hands and feet."

God is here,—as Creator, Revealer, Redeemer, Helper and Judge; and if we have eyes to see, ears to hear and hearts to understand, every place in which the world's life finds expression,—its homes, its schools, its churches, its social circles, its streets, its market places, its forums, its senates, its battle-fields, will be sacred or awful to us, because of the presence of God.

How Disciples Came to Jesus.

In the Bible lesson for the current week we see the first disciples of Jesus gathering to their Master. There is much in the passage that is interesting and instructive. Here is John the Baptist standing forth in rugged honesty and beautiful humility in his character of herald and witness-bearer, pointing men to Him in whom are met the supremest heights of Lordship and the profoundest depths of self-sacrificing love, who is the world's king and the world's sin-offering, the Son of God and the Lamb of God. There is a great and beautiful lesson in John's attitude toward Jesus, his kinsman according to the flesh, but his Lord according to the Spirit. In John's great, loyal heart, jealousy finds no shelter. He is not "that light" for which the world has waited, he is but its herald, and he is content like the morning star, to disappear at the coming of the perfect day, swallowed up in the glory of that light of which it was his joy to be the harbinger. We are assured that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than John, but those virtues of humility, loyalty to God and unselfish devotion to righteousness which were so grandly exemplified in the Baptist are not so conspicuous in the Christian world today that we can afford to pass lightly by the brief record of the man who was content to disappear from sight in order that men might behold one greater than he.

It is instructive to observe how men came to be associated with Jesus as his disciples. Certainly he did not choose men without respect to their fitness for intimate discipleship and apostleship, nor were they chosen in any arbitrary way. There was in the case of all who were true men and real disciples the working out of that principle which Jesus himself enunciated,— "To him that hath shall be given." The men mentioned in the lesson were evidently all disciples of John. They were his disciples at least in the sense that they had been attracted by his preaching, had listened to his message and believed his witness concerning the Messiah about to appear. Two of them were with John when he pointed out Jesus and declared him to be the Lamb of God. At once they followed Jesus, that they might know him and receive the truth from his own lips. And as they listened to his words, the conviction grew stronger in their hearts that John's testimony concerning him was true. They found also their own brothers—men doubtless of like spirit with themselves—and brought them to Jesus that they also might hear and believe. And so it is always; those who have advanced toward the truth with open ears and honest hearts shall receive larger measures of truth. The eyes which are open to the light and the promise of the morning star, shall by and by behold the glory of the rising sun; the men whose ears are attentive to the voice that cries in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way," shall by and by behold the King in his beauty; those who are ready to accept the invitation of Jesus, "Come and see," will by and by be able to say to him with full conviction, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." It is not given to every man to be a John, a Peter or a Paul; but to every humble, believing soul it is given to enter the inner circle of intimate discipleship to Christ and in some real sense to be an apostle in his name.

We learn from the lesson also how the circle of disciples was enlarged, evidently it was largely through the influence of those who having come near to Jesus and having felt the influence of his matchless personality, went and sought out their brethren or their friends to tell them whom they had found and to bring them also to Jesus. It is by this means largely that the power of Christianity has been extended through the world. An Andrew finds the Christ, and goes and tells his brother Simon, a John comes into loving touch with the Master, and brings his brother James. Philip is found of Jesus, and straightway announces to his friend Nathanael that the Messiah is come. A woman feels her heart laid bare to the pure eyes of Jesus, and hastens to tell her friends and acquaintances of this searcher of hearts, who must be the Christ. The power of personal testimony, reflecting personal experience, has always been a potent factor in promoting the spread of vital Christianity in the world. More convincing, more potent to bring men and women to Christ than the

most eloquent enforcement of truth, is the broken testimony of some contrite heart which, bowing before the Lord, has felt the healing touch of his love and received the gracious assurance "thy sins are forgiven thee." What the world needs today is more of this testimony, more of the experience out of which such testimony is born.

Editorial Notes.

—It is reported that certain women of Granada have been stoning the statue of Christopher Columbus, which adorns their city, because, by discovering America, he prepared the way for Spain's present humiliation. It is not stated that any of the stones thrown by the dark-eyed maids of Granada hit the statue, and in the absence of definite information, it may be presumed on general principles, that, whatever else may have been hit, the statue of the famous explorer escaped serious injury.

—"A Happy New Year to you"—men, women and children are saying to one another just now, as they meet by the way. It is a kindly greeting, the words have a pleasant sound, and very likely the utterance of the benevolent sentiment helps to cultivate a kindlier feeling among friends and neighbors. Still, when the words are uttered as a mere "compliment of the season," as they often are, they doubtless do not add materially to the world's stock of happiness. If one really desires and purposes to do something to make the world happier, then these compliments of the season are not without meaning, and surely for all Christians, that should be a ruling purpose. If all follow the apostolic injunction, "Look not everyone on his own things, but everyone also on the things of others," something will be accomplished toward realizing those benevolent sentiments which find utterance in one newspaper's greeting.

—A Medicine Hat despatch states that the Black-foot Indians are reported to be killing the cattle of settlers in the Red Deer country and that a patrol of mounted police has been sent to preserve order there. It is added that the Indians are short of meat, as the antelope have not come south owing to the mild weather. Any one who considers how dependent the Indians of the Northwest still are for the means of living upon the results of their fishing and hunting, cannot wonder that occasionally a raid is made upon the herds of the more provident white man. Any one who has read the books of John McDougall (one of which was recently noticed in these columns) knows to what straits the Indians, and the missionary as well, were put at times, even in the days when the great herds of Buffalo roamed over the great plains. Now that the buffalo are all gone, the condition of the uncivilized and improvident Indian, notwithstanding the help that he receives from the Government, must be not less precarious, and it is not therefore to be taken as a proof of the red man's utter depravity, if in his extremity he fails at times to pay strict regard to the distinction between *meum* and *tuum*. The Indian can doubtless suffer hunger with an equanimity quite beyond the emulation of the white man, but even for the Indian, it is hard to starve, and see his wife and children starve, in view of herds which fatten on his ancestral prairies. Of course we may say that the Indian should cultivate the soil and raise herds for himself, he should be more industrious and more provident. Doubtless he is making some progress and will make more in that direction, but it can hardly be hoped to transform the savage into a model citizen within a single generation.

—The announcement which President Trotter makes in another column, concerning the result of the canvass on behalf of the Forward Movement Fund, together with the report of the committee on that subject, will be read with keen and grateful interest by many readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. It is most gratifying to us that the paper is permitted, in its first issue of the new year, to carry to the public this excellent report. Very appropriately Dr. Trotter expresses his grateful recognition of the favor of God which has rested upon this undertaking, and thanks the friends of the institutions who by their generous donations, or by expending time and effort in canvassing, have contributed to the success of the Forward Movement. And the denomination will certainly not forget, in this connection, how much it owes to the work of President Trotter, whose faith in God and in the people, prudent planning, indomitable hope and unflinching tact have, by the blessing of Heaven, contributed so much to carry this large undertaking to assured success.