

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL & GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

A NEW YEAR'S HYMN.

Hail dawning year! thy step is on the mountains!
Thy wind-harp soundeth through the frozen vales!
Thy silence, reigned, o'er the ice-bound fountains!
Thy breath, comes to us in the wintry gales!

Another year! to tell the hopes we cherish;
Direct to heaven, the sinner's wand ring ever;
Warm him with falling tears, before he perish;
And, in dense gloom, the death eternal drive.

A year, to haste where sorrow's child is weeping,
And weep in unfeigned sympathy with him;
And where, o'er those who fade, long vigils keeping,
The eyes that watch are waxing weak and dim.

When happy voices thankful songs are singing,
To carol with them a responsive strain;
And while the rapid months are onward winging,
Live for the honor of our Master's name.

A year, to remember all for succour calling;
Around the weak our sympathies to twine;
Stretch out the kindly hand to help the falling;
To cherish motives noble and divine.

When half-clad wanderers round our pathway shiver,
With tender hand to clothe their trembling forms,
To ask of him whose love flows like a river,
To shield the poor from life's tempestuous storms.

A year, to haste where life's bright sun is sinking,
Below the cloudy horizon of time;
Where holy ones a bitter cup are drinking,
Yet drink with patience from a source divine.

Where dampness cold the brow serene is covering,
And messengers of peace from worlds above,
Are round the fading Christian's death-couch hovering,
To vie with angels in their deeds of love.

Another year, should gloom thy path be shrouding,
And sorrows cluster thickly round thy way;
Should doubts and fears the sun of heaven be clouding,
Then look to Jesus: Christian, trust and pray.

Through this dim vestibule serenely straying,
Your lamps, with oil which wasteth not, to trim;
Till their pure radiance round the footstep playing,
Guard you from wand'ring in the paths of sin.

Another year! to sow with heartfelt weeping;
To toil, to pray, ye ransomed sons of light!
To hope through all things for a glorious reaping,
And keep your jewelled garments pure and white.

Then when the last hour comes, the Saviour grant-
ing
His love divine to light the shadows dim;
Your head will press the dying pillow, chanting,
"With joy, the saints' triumphant vesper hymn."

On, to that world which the redeemed inherit,
Shall guardian seraphs bear thee on their wing;
There the glad anthems of your ransomed spirit,
Will make the golden streets with music ring.

Onslow.

Religious.

THE NEW YEAR'S HIDDEN GIFTS.

BY MARIANNE FARNINGHAM.

With hands full of blessings comes the
New Year—holding forth to us much that we
can see, keeping back in the hidden recesses
of its clasped hands still more. Very pleas-
ant are its visible gifts—new year's wishes
and congratulations, the hearty grasp of hands
that are warm and true, love-lamps fresh
lighted to hear with us through the dark fu-
ture, and, above all, the unfeigned promise,
"As thy day, so shall thy strength be."

But these are not its hidden gifts. These
are what it bears on its surface when first it
is ushered into our presence. Very pleasant
and precious are they all—love-tokens from
our Father in heaven, who cares for us and
our happiness, and will have us singing songs
of gratitude and trust to him.

And the New Year's hidden gifts are as
good as those which it brings openly. And
as, one by one, the treasures from its casket
are exhibited, we shall see how each one is a
blessing in disguise.

That is one—that loss in the coming
month, which as yet you know nothing of.
Fearing no diminution of earthly good, you
are stepping gladly over the threshold sepa-
rating one time from another. But the new
year has a hidden gift for which you will
not eagerly open your hand. Care, anxiety,
and tribulation, instead of prosperity and
ease! Not a pleasant change—but a blessed
one, or it would not be made.

That sickness, which shall take the bloom

from your cheek, and the sparkle from your
eye, is another of the new year's hidden gifts.
And it comes straight from the Father's lov-
ing hand—a hand that cannot err. You
would rather not have it, you shrink back
from the prospect; but it is a blessing, never-
theless.

That bereavement—but here our hearts
cannot help crying out, Anything but that, O
Lord! Let not that be one of the new year's
hidden gifts. Well, again may we shelter
ourselves under the Almighty love of our
Father. He will send us no sorrow that is
not absolutely necessary, and that does not
bring a blessing in its wake.

Altogether unlooked for and unexpected
may be the new year's hidden gifts, and of a
very variegated character. Some which, if
we knew of, would fill our hearts with joyous
expectation; some which would overshadow the
new year with fear and misgiving. How
grateful should we be that the future is thus
hidden from us; how resolutely trustful of
the unfeigned kindness of our Friend.

Gladly and fearlessly may we go forth to
meet the new year, knowing that it is but a
messenger of love. Our language should be,
"Choose Thou for us, only prepare us for
whatever Thou hast prepared for us."

YEARLY TALES.

BY THE REV. H. WATTS.

Through the mercy and goodness of God,
we have been spared to see the commence-
ment of a new year. The old year with all its
changes, is now lost in the eternity of the past.
Now we enter upon another year without know-
ing what shall befall us. We may not live to
see its close, or we may. If we do, we shall
again have joys and troubles, losses and gains,
triumphs and defeats. We do not expect to
be always singing, nor do we fear that we
shall be always groaning. We look out for
sunshine as well as storm, for day as well as
night, and have faith to believe that all things
work together for our good. Well, whatever
may be our lot, let us, with bared brows,
thank God for a new year. It is something
to be alive, more still to be healthy in body,
and better far to be healthy in soul. For these
and ten thousand kindred mercies, let us adopt
the language of the Psalmist, and say, "Bless
the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within
me bless his holy name."

In the Word of God I find a very remark-
able statement—one that has often arrested
my attention, and one which, if meditated
upon, may positively do us good on the pre-
sent occasion. It is a passage which has re-
lation to the fleetness of time, and it runs
thus:—"We spend our years as a tale that
is told." Psalm xc. 9. Is it true? Let us
see.

Some of us this past Christmas, perhaps,
after partaking of good Christmas fare, sat
down by the fireside, and whilst the huge log
sent its flame and sparks and smoke up the
roaring chimney, we passed away the time by
listening to short tales, told us by good-na-
tured narrators, some of them making us
merry, and others making us sad. Did you,
reader, as you sat by that bright fire, and lis-
tened to one of those tales, think that it was
a type of human life? The voice that inter-
ested you then is not now heard; the tale
that pleased you so much, you only half re-
member; the humorous part, that so tickled
your fancy and made you so merry, hardly
now calls forth a smile; and the tear dropped
at the narration of an affecting incident is
lost for ever. The tale is told: and its re-
membrance only serves to illustrate the na-
ture and brevity of human life. As life
speeds, the years seem to become shorter in-
stead of longer; and when the termination
of life approaches, the beginning will nearly
be forgotten.

How are we spending our years? If we
spend our years as a tale that is told, let
us take care that our years shall make a good
tale. Some tales are good, and some bad;
some have a useful tendency, others a corrupt
tendency. Among the latter we may class
most novels and romances. A good tale is
not a story merely that contains stirring in-
cident, humorous narrative, well-aid plots,
and fine poetry; a good tale will be of such
a character as to make us better after reading
it than we were before; and if the tale we

read has not that tendency, however talented
may be the author, it had better be thrown
into the waste-paper basket, or cast into the
fire.

"Good love-stories," as they are called,
—stories praised to the skies by sentimental
young ladies, whose idea of a good story is
embodied in the phrase "love at the begin-
ning, an elopement in the middle, and a mar-
riage at the end"—are not often good, though
they are often the types of the lives of their
advocates, doubtless. Let us not be repre-
sented by such types; rather let us seek grace
of God, that our lives may be represented by
well-written tales full of solid matter, incul-
cating good only, shedding a hallowed influ-
ence on all around, kindling love in many
breasts, and ever tending to make the world
nobler, freer, happier. Such lives may be
spent, but they are never lost. They are
treasured up in the memories of the great and
good when their owners have passed away,
seeing that it is written, "The righteous shall
be in everlasting remembrance."

If we spend our years as a tale that is
told, let us live as if our tale is to come to an
end. Reader, as all tales have an end, your
tale will be some day brought to a conclusion.
You may be planning schemes, plotting, adding
scene to scene, but every paragraph brings
the end of the tale nearer. The God who
said, three thousand years ago, "Return, ye
children of men," says, "Return, ye children
of men," still. The man full of health and
vigour and warm blood to-day, shall, by God's
mandate, be a cold, lifeless mass of flesh to-
morrow. The pestilence shall walk in dark-
ness; fevers shall yearly carry off their thou-
sands; sudden deaths meet men as they walk
along the streets; the cold, icy finger of the
dark and dreaded enemy touches the hearts
of the king and the pauper, the old and
the young; and so they all pass away as a
tale that is told. If you are not prepared
for the finishing stroke, you will have to tell
your tale in hell; only as you live for Christ
will you be prepared, at the last to lay down
your active pen, at the completion of the clos-
ing sentence, with a trembling hand but joy-
ous heart. No life tales close well but those
that close with Christ.

To spend this year wisely and well, let us
seek, by God's help, to have some brighter
scene in the story than we had last year.
Reader, if you are unconverted, your worldly
glory, your gaudy show, your ribald songs,
your boisterous laughter, your ungodly com-
panions, may all look pretty and pleasant in
the tale now, but when the tale comes to be
read in the light of God's judgment, they
will all look repulsive and awful. These are
the bright scenes: those that give a man
to see that he is at peace with God through
the Lord Jesus Christ; those that unveil to
him, day by day, the beauty of the Saviour's
passion, and the worth of his blood, righteous-
ness, and salvation; those that unfold to him
experimentally the power of the Spirit's gra-
ces in the human heart and in the daily life,
all tending to the subjugation of sin, the exalta-
tion of holiness, the good of man, and the
glory of God; those that give him the feeling
of constant safety, enabling him to realize that
whether waking or sleeping, amid the motley
throng or in solitude, living or dying, with
him all shall be well. In other words, those
that enable him to triumph in the thought
that, should his tale be finished at once, he
is right for heaven. These are the bright
scenes that form the bright tale. With
these scenes, it matters not though our years
are spent as a tale that is told. Let them, in
such a case, roll on faster and faster; while
they only bring the sinners to our eternal home
—in that home to tell our tale to heaven's
wondering hosts, who, with us, will thank
God for its beginning, and worship him for its
end.

SWISS BAPTISTS.

Although Switzerland stands in the world's
history as a sort of synonym for devotion to
freedom, it does not in all respects justify its
honorable position in that regard. As in
other countries on the continent of Europe,
the Baptists of Switzerland have been, and
still are compelled to contend for even the
rights of religious liberty that are allowed to
others. In the Canton of St. Gall, the Con-
stitution adopted in 1861 guaranteed to all

citizens the free exercise of their religion.
In the following year a congregation of Bap-
tists asked that this provision might be ap-
plied in their case. It required two years
and a half for the authorities to determine
the question whether Baptists are entitled to
privileges constitutionally secured to all citi-
zens. At length the request was granted,
and now it is said, "the Baptists will not be
compelled to have their children baptized, and
the spectacle need not now be repeated of a
father wiping from the forehead of his child
the baptismal water with which it was sprink-
led against his consent." It should be add-
ed, to the honor of the Council, or Synod of
the above-named Canton, that it went farther
than this, relieved the members of dissenting
religious bodies, acknowledged by the State
as such, of ecclesiastical taxes. This is a
step in advance of England itself.

In other Cantons the old opposition con-
tinues. Lately, at Morpach, in Lucerne, a
man named Lauber had his six children taken
from him and placed in various families, that
they might be educated to the Roman Catho-
lic religion, because, having recently become
a Baptist, he refused to have his last child
"baptized." How long it takes the world to
escape from the dark ages! A new sect of
Baptist, called Neobaptists, is coming into
notice in Switzerland. In their principles
they are much like others of the name, but
seem to press those principles somewhat far-
ther than is customary with their brethren.—
Times.

OF RELIGIOUS POLICY.

A good man, now departed, said that Pres-
byterianism had flourished most when its
preachers were most distinguished by a zeal
for saving souls. When they tried to compete
in externals they found that other churches
easily outran them, having a long way the
start in that line. These are not his exact
words, but express his thought. Is it not
a thought worthy to be laid to heart by us,
and by all evangelical believers?

Much is said and written about denomina-
tional policy. The only policy that will build
us up is God's policy, which is shortly ex-
pressed in the words, "Seek first the kingdom
of God and His righteousness." Unless He
build the house, they labor in vain that build
it. Unless He work with us, our toil is in-
effectual. We must then labor for the same
end for which He is engaged. He sent His
Son to seek and save that which was lost.
He sends His Spirit to administer the gra-
cious kingdom of His Son. He calls His peo-
ple to be laborers in His vineyard. Only as
they devote themselves to His service, for
His work, in His spirit, have they any prom-
ise or any hope.—W. & R.

I WISHED IT TRUE.

When I was quite young, many years ago,
all the people around me in my rural home,
so far as they had any religious belief, were
evangelical. Only good seed had been sown,
and on those hill-sides many gracious plants
had taken deep root, grown strong, and pro-
duced the best of fruit. But the time came
when "men slept," and an enemy crept in,
sowing tares. A backslidden member of the
church, under censure for inebriety, returned
from a visit "down country," where he had
heard a Mr. Ballou preach Universalism, and
became enamored of the flesh-pleasing doc-
trine. Immediately he commenced retailing
what he had welcomed to his own heart, and
not long after, he succeeded in establishing a
monthly Sunday service in a school-house for
a preacher of his new faith. The friends of
truth were excited, and pursued a course not
the best adapted to repress the germs of
heresy. We young people, tired of the old
preaching, and wishing to throw off the re-
straints of a severe morality, went to hear the
explanations of the novel theory. The pre-
acher was fluent and persuasive, and many of
the young, greatly to the grief of their pa-
rents, were captivated.

I heard the whole argument, and for a time
was in danger of being ensnared. From a
child I had been taught the Scriptures by my
mother and my grandmother, but I had none
of that faith which stands in the power of
God, and therefore I was insecure. I desired