

A Happy New Year.

I SEND to you a greeting,
Dear, unknown friends, to-day;
Wherever you may journey,
God speed you on your way!
God's smile be on you, every one,
The distant and the near,
And make the time that comes to us
A happy, happy year!

We have not seen the faces
That many of you wear,
But we know they oft are shaded
By sorrow and by care.
We cannot hear the voices
That sing the songs of earth,
But we know that sometimes there are sighs
To check the joyous mirth.

We often kneel together
Before our Father's feet;
Perhaps we pass each other
Along the crowded street.
We shall go home together,
And know as we are known
Within our Father's house above,
When he shall call his own.

And so we send our wishes
To you across the snow;
Our heart longs for the blessings
Which you desire to know.
God make, if it be best for you,
The trouble-storm to cease,
And give to you true riches,
And fill you with his peace!

May winter days grow cheery,
With love for warmth and light;
May summer's joy be all the year
To make your spirits bright;
May labour have its guerdon
Of good reward and rest,
And with the holiest benison
May each of you be blest!

May this New Year be better
Than any gone before,
Filled with devoted service,
And crowned with plenty's store.
God cheer it with his presence,
And, if it be the last,
Grant an eternity of bliss
When the fleeting years are past.
—Marianne Farningham.

Points for Young Men.

MANY a man is, every inch of him, a religious man on one day of the week, and a non-religious man all the other six days. He walks reverently to church on Sundays, sits down in his pew—for he has sittings of his own—sings sacred hymns, joins in the prayers, listens to the sermon, drops his offering on the plate, goes home, and wears an air of devoutness all day; but, when Monday morning comes, he stows away all his religion like his Sunday suit of clothes, and says, "Lie there—you shall not be wanted again till next Sabbath." And, should there happen on Monday to be anything in business that is not straight, and one ventures to say to him, "I did not expect this of a Christian man," he fires up, and replies, "What has that to do with religion? Everything in its own place. Religion is religion, and business is business." And so there is this hateful fallacy springing up that godliness is a thing distinct from your daily life; a garb for Sundays only, like this pulpit robe, which is worn but fifty-two days in the year, and all the other days hangs useless in the wardrobe!

There is in my garden a sort of wild convolvulus, pretty enough in itself, but very harmful in summer to better plants, for it spreads itself all around, and shoots up at every point, and twines itself round fern and fuchsia, and hollyhock and rose tree, almost choking them to death. Just so it is with

business in our day; it usurps every part of a man, and well-nigh strangles every religious sentiment in him. Pardon me being plain; but some of you, my lads, are well-nigh smothered with newspapers and price-currents, and share-lists and letters, and circulars and accounts, and bills and invoices, and all the rest of it; so that any spiritual element in you, and relish for God's word, are destroyed; for, as Christ has told us, these things "choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." Is it any wonder that the lamp of living piety burns so low and dim?

I remember visiting the Grotto del Cane, near Naples, a natural cavern, which is partly charged with a highly poisonous atmosphere. This carbonic acid gas, however, being heavier than common air, rests upon the ground, reaching only to a height of about three or four feet; the consequence being, that whilst a man may walk upright through the cave uninjured, yet if he stoops, or lies down in it, a few seconds will prove fatal. So, if you keep your head up toward heaven, and above the poisonous miasma that surrounds you, you may walk uninjured through the world; but if you rest in it, and breathe it, your very life is in peril. I do not say that there is no hope for your soul unless you read a chapter and kneel down to prayer every morning at six or seven, and every evening about ten. No; but I do say that it is most important that you should have fixed habits of daily devotion, and not allow anything to interfere with the due culture of your spiritual life. Come, now, be honest; are not some of you prepared to confess that, from the date of your giving up regular seasons of private devotion, you have gone back spiritually, and have lost the inward joy and glowing hope you once possessed? I am not surprised you do not come to communion. Young man! tonight, it may be, at your bed-room door, on the third floor, you will think you hear a gentle knock. "Come in." Ah! there is no one there but he who knocked at Samuel's door, and would not let him sleep. It is Jesus, the young man's friend, saying, "Wilt thou forget me? Wilt thou cast off thy Saviour?" Rise, brother, and take your Bible out of the trunk, if it is still stowed away. Down upon your knees, and say, "My father's God, my mother's God, thou shalt be my God too. Henceforth I will live for thee, and openly confess thee. What doth hinder me to join myself unto thy people?"—*Rev. J. Thain Davidson.*

Inspiring Confidence.

HENRY WARD BEECHER certainly owed a debt of gratitude to his teacher in mathematics, not only for the knowledge acquired through his tuition, but for lessons tending to strength of character. He tells this story to illustrate the teacher's method: He was sent to the blackboard, and went, uncertain, soft, full of whimpering. "That lesson must be learned," said the teacher, in a very quiet tone, but with a terrible intensity. All explanations and excuses he trod under foot with utter scornfulness. "I want that problem; I don't want any reasons why you don't get it," he would say.

"I did study it two hours."
"That's nothing to me; I want the lesson. You need not study it at all, or you may study it ten hours, just to suit yourself. I want the lesson."
"It was tough for a green boy," says Beecher; "but it seasoned him. In less than a month I had the most intense sense of intellectual independence, and courage to defend my recitations. His cold and calm voice would fall upon me in the midst of a demonstration, 'No!'"

"I hesitated, and then went back to the beginning, and on reaching the same spot again, 'No!' uttered with the tone of conviction barred my progress.

"The next;' and I sat down in red confusion. "He too was stopped with 'No!' but went right on, finished, and as he sat down was rewarded with 'Very well.'

"Why!' whimpered I, 'I recited it just as he did, and you said 'No!'"

"Why didn't you say 'Yes!' and stick to it? It is not enough to know your lesson. You must know that you know it. You have learned nothing till you are sure. If all the world says 'No!' your business is to say 'Yes!' and prove it!"

That is just what hearts that are sick want—comfort; and they have it in Christ Jesus, and in the Fatherhood of God, and nowhere else in such measure and with such pertinency of application.

LESSON NOTES.

FIRST QUARTER.

STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF MARK.

A.D. 20] LESSON I. [Jan. 6

THE MISSION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

Mark 1. 1-11. Commit to memory verses, 6-8

GOLDEN TEXT.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Mark 1. 3.

TIME.—26 A.D. The opening of the year preliminary to Christ's public work, called the year of preparation or obscurity.

PLACES.—The wilderness of Judea. The banks of the Jordan River, not far north of the Dead Sea. Nazareth.

EXPLANATIONS.—*The beginning of the Gospel*—The beginning of the story, rather, which is the Gospel. Gospel means good news; the beginning of the story of how the "good news" came to men. *In the Prophets*—In the books which had been written and left by the prophets, and which were a part of the Jewish Scriptures. *The voice of one, etc.*—This means, I am the man who was to cry in the wilderness, as foretold that some man should, "Prepare ye," etc. *Make his paths straight*—Or, make straight the paths for his feet; that is, help him to go about his work with directness and certainty. *Baptism of repentance*—A symbolic act, announcing the purpose of the one baptized to live a changed life. *Remission of sin*—This remission was to come from Jesus the Christ, and was not made sure by John's baptism. *All the land of Judea*—All the inhabitants of the land. This shows how powerfully John preached. *Clothed with camel's hair*—Clothing made from stuff woven from camel's hair, which was a coarse material common among the peasants. *A girdle of a skin*—This is another evidence of his poverty. He could not have the girdles worn by his more fortunate countrymen, but cut his own from the skin of beasts. *Eat locusts and wild honey*—Still another proof of how poor he was, and that in his face he was allied to the wandering Bedouins. *Latchet of whose shoes*—The thong by which the sandal was fastened to the foot; to unloose it was a menial's office.

QUESTIONS FOR HOME STUDY.

- The Voice in the Wilderness, vs. 1-8.*
Whose voice was this?
What did he declare? (Golden Text.)
For whom did he prepare the way?
How did John dress and live?
What did he call upon the people to do?
What is it to repent? Isa. 55. 7.
What did John do to those who repented?
What did John say of Jesus?
What did he say that Jesus would do?
When was this fulfilled? Acts 2. 1-4.
- The Voice from Heaven, vs. 9-11.*
Who came to be baptized by John?
From what place did he come?
How old was Jesus at this time? Luke 3. 23.
What took place when he was baptized?
What words were spoken?
Who spoke these words?

THE LESSON CATECHISM.

1. About what does Mark the evangelist write? The gospel of the Son of God. 2. How did it begin? In the preaching of John. 3. What did he preach? The baptism of repentance. 4. What prophecy did his preaching fulfil? "Prepare ye the way," etc. 5. In what did his work culminate? In the baptism of Jesus.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION.—Repentance.

CATECHISM QUESTION.

1. What do you mean by religion?
Our whole duty to God our Creator.