

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

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THE END OF THE CENTURY.

By Edward S. Van Zile.

Where a century lay dying,
The nations, waiting, heard
A great soul softly sighing;
They hearkened to its word.
From a century of glory,
A century of strife,
Came a strange and stirring story
In the evening of its life.

In the evening of its ending
Told the age that lingered there
A tale of grandeur blending
A prophecy and prayer.
Spake the century that passes
To the Future: "You shall see
On the faces of the masses
An epitaph to me.

"I saw the world a-groaning
Neath the tyranny of might;
And I heard the people moaning.
I was young, and it was night.

And where ocean rolled to ocean,
Where land met land again,
There was ship-of-war in motion,
Or marching hordes of men.

"Then what nation cried to nation,
What flew from wave to wave,
But divided God's creation
For despot and for slave.
But tighter, ever tighter,
I knit the hearts of men;
Their burdens, growing lighter,
Were bearable again.

"To tyrants came a warning;
The slave was freed at last.
The dawn broke, then the morning;
The night of man was passed.
Then races spake to races,
Despite the hills and deep;
A soul, with countless faces,
Awakened from its sleep.

"To-day a phantom haunteth
A genius far away;
To-morrow mankind vaunteth
New light upon its way!
For this the age of ages
Hath won from stubborn things—
The wisdom of the sages
Is born anew with wings.

"There is no hermit nation;
There is a human race!
Who holds an outland station
Must answer face to face.
Where cruelty still lingers
Beside the widening path
Are pointing ghostly fingers
A-beckoning God's wrath.

"The heirs to ancient errors,
The centuries shall die
The champions whose terrors
Prove blessings by and by;

While they who rule the ocean,
And they who win the land,
Obey in every motion
A spirit in command.

"'Tis the soul of us awaking
To the gleams that come again
Of splendour in the making
Of the history of men.
The very stars turned teachers,
The rocks and caves awake,
The seas and hills made preachers
For Truth's immortal sake—

"These be the mighty powers
That glorify the sight
Of man, who seeketh flowers
That cannot bloom at night—
Can only bloom to-morrow,
When war shall cease for aye,
And the centuries of sorrow
Are forgotten by and by."

THE END.

Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof, says the proverb. That depends upon circumstances. The end of a well-spent life is certainly better than its beginning, so too is the end of a well-spent year; but if the year or the life be ill-spent, then the end is incomparably worse than the beginning. To secure a good end to the year on which we are about to enter we must see that its beginning and every day and hour be used as wisely as possible.

The accompanying picture is a sort of allegory. The Breton peasants sitting on the lonely seashore are looking out on that solemn emblem of eternity, the endless sea. On such a shore we wander day by day. Even the wisest of men are, as Newton said, like children picking up pebbles and finding perchance in some great discovery one pebble brighter than the rest. Let us, however, look not mournfully into the past, but look hopefully and trustfully into the future. If we have wasted life, let us waste it no longer. Let us seek God's guidance and grace for the future. Let us put our hands trustfully in his and go forward in his guidance, knowing that if we but follow it he will guide us into all truth, into perfect peace, into endless life.

THE NEW YEAR.

There is something very suggestive in the old Roman idea of the God of boundaries. For the lines that are drawn upon our life, as time passes away, and the future becomes the past, can scarcely be too closely scanned.

"'Tis greatly wise to talk with our past hours,
And ask them what report they bore to Heaven;
And how they might have borne more welcome news."

And, therefore, the passing away of one year, and the coming of the next, must challenge the very grave consideration of every thoughtful mind. For that has gone that can never be recalled; and that has come that will never

pass away. We can no more get back to where we stood, nor be what we were when the year commenced. Something has occurred about us which is irreversible; and something has taken place in us, which we cannot change.

And when we speak of the flight of time, do we not use words expressive of an idea that is not strictly true?

"It is not time that flies;
'Tis we; 'tis we are flying.
It is not time that dies;
'Tis we, 'tis we are dying!"



Time and eternity are ne—
Time is eternity begun."

For is not time that which is measured by periods—because we are imperfectly developed? And is not eternity that which has no measure, because we have attained our development? Does spirit ever grow old? Does thought ever decay? And is a spiritual nature subject to the measurement of the days and weeks and years? Therefore the measurement—by the revolution of heavenly bodies—of the period of our existence

here, and as we are now constituted, is simply a tribute of acknowledgment of our imperfect state. It will not be our experience when we are clothed upon with our spiritual bodies.

Will it be said, Does not the Apostle assert that time is short?

Of course he does. But not in the sense of short as opposed to long. The truth he is teaching has no connection with that. Literally, his expression is "The time that remains is shortened." Shortened as the furled sail is. As the corpse, wrapped around with the grave-clothes of the ancients, was. It is true

of the shortened sail, and the furled-in powers, is drawing to its close. Its sands are fast running out. By and by we shall reach the land of the living. "In a little while" we shall enter upon our perfected state, and that which is in part shall be for ever done away.

Meanwhile, with strangely impressive eloquence, the passing year calls upon us—

1. To place a right estimate upon the events by which we are surrounded. Because "the time is shortened," we should let our moderation be known to all men." We must not be unduly elated by prosperity, nor cast down by adversity or trial.

2. To be faithful in doing the work that yet remains to be done. The command is, "Occupy till I come!" And the declaration is, "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing!"

It is just the message of the new year to every one of us. Shall we wisely and reverently heed it?

THE COMING YEAR.

The new year can be likened unto a blank book of 365 pages, which has been placed in our hands. What will the book contain at the year's end? Some pages will be stained with tears. Some will be crumpled as if clutched in despair. Some will contain words of hate and anger, which will burn the pages whereon they are written. Other pages will be filled with the record of 'something accomplished, something done,' which has earned a night's repose. There will be the record of battles fought,

and at the end of the year we can turn back and see when we have conquered, when we have lost. There will be written upon these pages in letters of gold an account of self-sacrifices, loves and faithful devotions—Selected.

"Let me offer you myself as a Christmas present, Mildred, dear," said young Mr. Goslin.

"I accept only useful Christmas gifts, thank you, Mr. Goslin," replied the maiden.