

much of the minister, and tell him they "enjoy his preaching." Such people have never once in their lives suffered themselves to speak of their inward state; have persistently and skilfully evaded any talk about their eternal prospects; all the spiritual work of the church they have left to be done by others—taking good care none of that "work" should be done on *them*! and there they sit in the church, neither properly in it nor out of it.

If the pastor urges on some young person, a complete surrender, and an outward profession, the answer is at once, "Why, there's Mr. A., and Mr. B., just as good people as any possible member of the church, and they don't become members!" And yet those very "honorary" members themselves, have a good deal to say; if any great scandal or wrong-doing comes to light among the members. Then they can speak very eloquently about "those professors of religion!" They desire to sail on the gospel ship; they are neither enrolled among the crew, nor have they taken up shares of stock among the owners. They are supernumeraries, where none such are allowed.

In many instances these people have a spark of Grace in their hearts—but they never let it have one breath of *air*, to kindle it to a flame! They are afraid to go out openly into the unbelieving world, and cast stones at Christ. They won't go into the fold, but they linger round near it. When Christ has anything to *ask* of his people, they "beg to be excused;" when he has something to *give* his people, they "want to be *there*."

If such people could only know—or would only believe those who *do* know the blessings of church-membership, they would not linger a moment! A brother often remarks, "I cannot tell you the blessing this church-membership has been to me for these long and many years! It has helped my feeble graces—it has put me in the way of helping others—it has led me to understand the Scriptures—it has strengthened me in temptation; for I had the "family honor" of the church to maintain—it has been a blessing, and only a blessing to me these long years!"

Let the question be answered, (and you, dear reader, are perhaps the one to answer it!) "Do I belong to Christ?" If so, then rank yourself at once among His disciples. If you *don't* belong to Christ, you must belong to Satan! and it is time you set vigorously about your Salvation!

## Our Contributors.

### THE CHANGING YEAR.\*

*From the Dec. number of "Our Sheaf," Congregational Mutual Improvement Society, Hamilton.*

"The melancholy days have come,  
The saddest of the year,"

pensively remarks the poet of our last evening's meeting. And although the Autumn days to which he specially alludes have gone, the loss is so recent, the impression so fresh, as to make the suggestions of that changing season a fitting theme to-night.

It is given to others besides the poet to feel the sad suggestiveness of the time, although he expresses it more clearly, sweetly than we can.

White clouds hurrying across the blue sky,--the warm air as it throbs with song of bird and hum of insect, the steaming earth pushing forth its treasures of utility and beauty--these give us a sense of life: but when we see the sky robed in gloomy vapors, the air deserted and songless, trees casting their crowns of glory into the dust before the unpitying winds—who can help imagining that Nature herself stands mute with sorrow, or feel, with her, the presence of an unseen destroyer! But nature is full of symbolisms; and we have just been in the presence of, perhaps, her most powerful one, in its pathos and truth-teaching.

Be her sorrow real or imaginary, the lesson taught is the same: that Life is reached through the gates of Death. The God of nature has ordained this, as we may constantly see by nature's unceasing change. No improvement can be made without destroying something that existed before. As the leaves that fall fertilize the soil and insure a richer growth in the future, so our experiences and performances are not to be regarded as perfect, but to give place to better things as the years roll past us.

The foliage and fruit of coming days cannot appear until that of the present is removed.

[\* Wishing to encourage every good thing among our young people, we make room for the above, as a favorable specimen of the papers read at their meetings. The somewhat redundant style, and heaping up of adjectives, in vogue among them, mellows down in a few years into good, solid English, flowery enough to be graceful and direct enough not to cloy. But every writer has to begin! We have been there! Ed.]