

A New Year.

BY MARGARET SANGSTER.

Why do we greet thee, O blithe New Year?
What are thy pledges of mirth and cheer?
Comest, knight-errant, the wrong to right,
Comest to scatter our gloom with light?
Wherefore the thrill, the sparkle and shine,
In heart and eyes at a word of thine?

The old was buoyant, the old was true,
The old was brave when the old was new.
He crowned us often with grace and gift;
His sternest skies had a deep blue rift.
Straight and swift, when his hand unclasped,
With welcome and joyance thine we grasped.
O tell us, year—we are fain to know—
What is thy charm that we hail thee so?

A voice rolls out in a jubilant song,
A conqueror's ring in its echo strong;
Through the ether clear, from the solemn sky
The New Year beckons, and makes re-ly:

"I bring you, friends, what the years have brought
Since ever men toiled, aspired, or thought—
Days for labour, and nights for rest;
And I bring you love, a heaven-born guest;
Space to work in, and work to do,
And faith in that which is pure and true.
Hold me in honour and greet me dear,
And sooth you'll find me a happy year."

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

Rev. W. H. WITHROW, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, JANUARY 7, 1893.

A HEROIC MISSIONARY.*

JAMES GILMOUR has been well called one of the greatest missionaries of the nineteenth century. His life was a consecration. His missionary career was one of remarkable adventure, in journeyings often, in perils many. His field of labour was one of the most difficult and unfamiliar, being the wild waste region of Mongolia, north and west of the great wall of China. His methods were unique. He assumed the garb of the native, and a very good Chinaman he looks in two of his portraits. He lived literally among the people, taking long journeys on foot, carrying his kit and provisions, waterproof bag with books, sheepskin coat and other belongings, making quite a heavy load.

HARDSHIPS.

The following is a characteristic extract from his journal: "Some of the days I spent in the market were so very cold that my muscles seemed benumbed and speech even was difficult. I met with some spiritual response though, and with that I can stand cold. Eh, man, I have got thim! . . . I have no words to tell you how the cold felt that day. I sold a fair number

*"James Gilmour of Mongolia, his Diaries, Letters and Reports," edited and arranged by Richard Lovett, M.A., author of "Norwegian Pictures." London: Religious Tract Society, Toronto: William Briggs. Octavo, pp. 336. Price \$1.50. With maps, portraits and illustrations.

of books, though my hands were to a much benumbed almost to hand the books out. I made some attempt at preaching but the muscles were also benumbed. That was a cold day! The great theme was Christ, and I think that most men in that little market town both heard and understood the great Gospel theme of truth and salvation in Jesus. . . . I walked a distance of about 300 miles in seven and a half days, about forty miles a day, and my feet were really very bad. At night I used to draw a woollen thread through the blisters. I "hirpled" a little in the morning, but was soon all right. I walked not because I had not money to ride, but to get at the Mongol who was with me. I was turned out of two respectable inns because I was a foot-traveller, had no cart or animal—that is, had to put up at a tramps' tavern because I came like a tramp."

In ill-health and feebleness extreme he toiled on. He lived on the native food and shared the hardships of the people. He made unceasing war against tobacco and liquor. "I believe," he says, "were Christ here now as a missionary amongst us he would be an enthusiastic teetotaler and non-smoker." Whiskey, tobacco and opium may be declared to be the great enemies of the Mongolians.

QUEER SINGING.

He speaks of the eagerness of the people to sing hymns. "Sometimes poor old women," he says, "when asked to sing would raise their cracked and quivering voices, and go through 'There is a happy land,' or, 'Safe in the arms of Jesus,' a good deal out of tune here and there, perhaps, but with an earnestness of feeling which was hard to witness with dry eyes. And if old people felt thus what about the young people? They seemed to revel in the hymns. Sankey revival hymns contain good Gospel, seem to be easily learned and set to tunes, which the Chinese never seem to tire of. These hymns I regard as a most powerful auxiliary to the other Gospel agencies at work." The constant Gospel singing, he declares, almost deafened one of his ears.

He was a very unconventional preacher. In one of his sermons he tells of a man who got drunk, and had his face blackened for him, so that when he got home his father did not know him, and when he saw himself accidentally in a glass he did not know himself. So, he says, God made us in his own image, but sin has terribly changed us. Purified by the Holy Ghost we may be again like ourselves and God.

When he did ride, the camel or mule litter was a most uncomfortable conveyance. Of one of his journeys he writes, "An occasional rest and bite of snow, vary the painful monotony of the few last long miles."

A ROMANTIC MARRIAGE.

The account of his marriage is very romantic. He fell in love with the portrait of his future wife in China and proposed to her by letter. He wrote his parents, "You may think I am rash in writing to a girl I have never seen. I may just say I have something the same feeling, but what am I to do? I have exercised my best thoughts on the subject, and put the matter in the hands of God, asking him if it be best to bring her, if not to keep her away. He can arrange the whole thing well." After counsel with friends and with God, the strangely wooed lady felt that this was one of the marriages which are made in heaven, and went out to join her future husband. But the romantic story must not be spoiled in the telling of it here.

In 1882 Mr. Gilmour and his wife enjoyed a short furlough in England and brought out his graphic book, "Among the Mongols." The London Spectator describes him as

ROBINSON CRUSOE TURNED MISSIONARY, as possessing the gift of Defoe of so stating things that the reader not only believes them, but sees them in bodily presence.

He stayed for years in Mongolia, living—on half frozen prairies and deserts, under open tents—on fat mutton, sheep's tails particularly, tea and oiled millet, eating once a day because the Mongols did, and in all things, except lying and stealing, making himself a lama.

In loyalty to his great life work he put away mere literary work. "I feel keenly," he wrote on his return to Peking, "that there is here more than I can do, and writ-

ing must go to the wall. I settle down to teach Chinamen and Mongols, heal their sores, and present Christ to them."

He had many hair-breadth escapes and remarkable adventures, on which we have not time to dwell. He longed especially for the sympathy and prayers of Christians at home. "Unprayed for," he said, "I feel very much as a diver sent down to the bottom of a river with no air to breathe, or as if a fireman were sent up in a blazing building with an empty hose, or like a soldier firing blank cartridge at the enemy." So he earnestly beseeches their prayers.

The labours of twenty years broke down his strong constitution. At the fairs he used to stand from early morning to night healing the sick, selling Christian books, and preaching the full, free Gospel of salvation. He tells of five hours conversation with one Chinaman at a stretch. "I think," he said, "he is not far from the kingdom of God."

A GREAT SORROW.

The death of his wife in 1885 was the great sorrow of his life. The account of her departure, as recorded in his diary, is very touching. "It really dawns upon me today in such a way that I can feel that my wife is likely to die and feel, too, something of how desolate it will be for me with my motherless children away from me. Eh, man!" His dying wife said, "Well, Jamie, I am going I suppose, I shall soon see you there. It won't be long. I think I will sit at the gate and look for your coming. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

Some of his letters to his boys at home in England, after the death of their mother, are very touching—like Luther's to his little Hans. While they were with him in Mongolia he was both father and mother to them, darning their stockings at night while they were in bed, and mending their clothes. When they were far away he wrote the little lads letters in a large printed hand, and sometimes illustrated them with sketches of the strange things which he saw. Their brief child-like letters to him were bound up in a volume which he carried about with him in his wanderings, and in looking over them he found an unflinching solace and refreshment.

TOUCHING LETTERS.

In one of his letters he says, "Cheer up my dear sonnies, we shall see each other yet. Tell all your troubles to Jesus. Let him be your friend. I often think of mamma and how she loved us. She still sees us every day, and is so pleased when you are good lads. We will all go some day and be with her. Won't that be good? Meanwhile Jesus is taking care of her and will take care of us. I just tell Jesus all my affairs; he is never too busy to talk to me. Just you too, tell Jesus all your troubles. He sees both you and me. Boys, do be true to Jesus in your words and deeds. Honour him. Make his heart glad. Jesus wants your love. He died for you. You cannot but love him if you think how he loves you. Meantime I am going to breakfast, and then for a day in the street trying to tell the people about Jesus."

Again he writes: "My dear sons, I think of you often and pray for you much. You have a photo of mamma's grave. Little Alec's grave is close to mamma's. On the side nearer is little Edly's. Mamma's and Alec's graves touch, down below they are together. But mamma and Alec are not there. They are in heaven, with its golden streets, and beautiful river, and beautiful gates and loving and kind people and Jesus and God. They are having a nice time of it there. My boys, don't be afraid of dying. Pray to Jesus. Do the things he likes, and if you die you will go to him—to his fine place where you will have everything that is nice and good. I do not know whether you or I will go first, but by and-by I hope we will all be there, mamma and Alec and all. Meantime let us be doing for Jesus, and we can tell people about him and try to persuade them to be his people. Are your school-fellows Jesus' boys? Do you ever tell them of him? Tell them, my dear sons. May you be good and diligent, then you will be happy. Jesus can make you glad."

LAST DAYS.

Mr. Gilmour was permitted to come home to England and spend a few months

with his dear boys. Though in failing health and near his end he spent several nights in pasting up Scripture texts, on stones, fences, and gateways, every place likely to catch the eye. He returned again to his beloved work to China, but scarcely had he reached that land when he was called from labour to reward.

To read this missionary biography is an inspiration to work for Jesus while he gives us time and opportunity. This book ought to be in all our Sunday-school libraries and mission circles. While a little more expensive than a good many library books it is much better than most of them.

THE WAY TO BE HAPPY.

ONCE there was a king, who had a little boy, whom he loved very much, and so he took a great deal of pains to make him happy. He gave him beautiful rooms to live in, and pictures and toys and books without number. He gave him a graceful, gentle pony that he might ride just where he pleased and a row-boat on a lovely lake, and servants to wait on him wherever he went. He also provided teachers, who were to give him the knowledge of things that would make him good and great; but for all this he was not happy. He wore a frown wherever he went, and was always wishing for something he did not have. At length one day a magician came to the court. He saw the scowl on the boy's face, and said to the king: "I can make your son happy, and turn his frowns into smiles, but you must pay me a great price for telling him the secret." "All right," said the king; "whatever you ask I will give."

So the price was agreed upon and paid, and the magician took the boy into a private room. He wrote something with a white substance upon a piece of paper. Next he gave the boy a candle, and told him to light it and hold it under the paper, and then see what he could read. Then he went away. The boy did as he had been told, and the white letters turned into a beautiful blue. They formed these words: "Do a kindness to some one every day." The prince made use of the secret and became the happiest boy in the realm.

FOREIGN MISSIONS.

Our sympathies are not to be limited to this little bit of our little planet. In this field our Church used to be lame in both feet; both men and money were wanting. It is limping now only on its left foot. For all that, we have scarcely got beyond the ABC of mission. The other day I read that America is spending as much money on cigarettes as on foreign missions. Government statistics prove that Great Britain is spending about the same sum on fox-hunting as on foreign missions; a few of our rich people are giving as much for one of their many pleasures—the collecting of fox tails—as all the Christians of Great Britain are giving to send the gospel to the heathen, and yet Britain is now ruling over one-fourth of the population of the globe, and nearly the whole world is an open door to the heralds of salvation.

The Methodist Magazine, for 1893, will be of special interest to all Bible readers, especially to all Sunday-school teachers and scholars. The editor will have a series of papers running through the year, or a great part of it on "Tent Life in Palestine," describing his adventures in traversing the Holy Land from Jaffa to Jericho, from Hebron to Damascus, including his visits to the sacred sites of Bethel, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Bethany, Olivet, Jordan and the Dead Sea, Shiloh, Shechem, Nain, Cana, Mount Tabor, Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, Tiberias, Capernaum, Mount Hermon, Damascus, Baalbec, and Beyrouth. These will be illustrated with scores of the most beautiful pictures of the sites and scenes of the Holy Land. He will also give a series of articles on, "What Egypt can Teach Us," describing the wonders of that famous country, so intimately associated with Bible story. Many schools have taken from two to forty copies of this magazine for circulation as being fresher, brighter, cheaper and more interesting than anything which could be got for the same price elsewhere.