

The Opening Year.

The Old Year, with its record,
Is gone for evermore
The New Year, full of promise,
Stands waiting at the door.

Ah! could we live it over!
So right we of the past,
Live we the new, as wish we now
That we had lived the last.

That past, its lessons teaching,
With guiding light should shine,
To warn from self-dependence,
And lead to grace divine.

With high resolve, and holy,
With purpose, firm and true,
Let us go forth with meekness,
God's will and work to do.

Then golden moments wasted,
And days all dark with sin,
Shall not so sadly colour
The year we now begin.

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Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

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

TORONTO, JANUARY 2, 1892.

THE OLD AND THE NEW.

1891-1892.

The old year, with its anxieties and cares, its labours and sorrows, its hopes and fears, opportunities and responsibilities, has passed away. It has joined itself to the cycles of the past, and its record is on high. It was on the whole a good year to most of the people in the Dominion.

Lay the old book away.
Its tale at last is done;
It is soiled and scarred,
It is dented and marred,
Since first it was begun.

Gratefully lay it down.
The lessons that it taught,
And the joy and grief
That marked each leaf
Were all with blessings fraught.

Such testimonies as the following are the chief joy of an editor. A lady in a remote part of Canada writes: "I must tell you that, had it not been for your papers, I am afraid some would never have come to Sunday school at all. Your PLEASANT HOURS has been the means of bringing me to Christ, for in it I found just what I had been wanting to know. I hope you will have every success in sending them abroad."

THE JUNIOR LEAGUE.

BY REV. D. B. BRUNNITT.

THE first Epworth league ever organized was a junior league. It was organized in a little Lincolnshire village rectory, away back in the early years of the eighteenth century. It had at least three departments—Christian work, mercy and help, and the literary department. Its membership formed a "look-up, lift-up" ten, and its first and only president was that model of mothers, Susannah Wesley.

It is the pride of our Christianity that of all faiths she is the foster mother of children. In all ages it has sought the religious elevation of the young. Luther "suffered the little children to go to Christ;" the noble work of Robert Raikes, scarce more than a century old since the "hot potato" days in Gloucester, would be unexplainable as an adjunct of any other creed, and the saying of John Wesley that the Sunday-school is the nursery of the Church is thoroughly Christian as well as Methodist. Our Church's policy on this point is simple and yet comprehensive. The children are to be trained in righteousness and in the doctrines of the Church, and they are to be trained both regularly and systematically. In so far as the junior league aids the pastor in the carrying out of this policy it has its rightful place. And even should it go no further, within this limit the field is neither narrow nor unpromising. From many causes—not at all sufficient causes, however—there has been neglect of the Church's plain duty in the furtherance of its policy, and the dangers which compass childhood have so far found freer course and richer harvest of victims. That it may be so nevermore is the sole and sufficient apology for the existence of the junior league. If I can have all the children between five and sixteen years of age in the junior league, and carry out its plans, at least its vital points, I will see to it that the Church shall never lack loyal and intelligent members, and we shall never know what it is to be without trained recruits for the Epworth League army. Take the children of Methodism, give them earnest, personal Christian work, give them abundant exercise of their sensitive instincts of mercy and help, put them in the way of the elementaries of good literature, train and develop their inborn love of entertainment and recreation, make their organization self-supporting, and find for them benevolent uses for the money they have earned, inculcate in them habits of orderly and systematic record-making, and you will have, by-and-bye, graduates from the junior league who shall be to you a tower of strength in every department of your young people's society.

The junior league, in its theory and in its only proper practice, is essentially a religious organization. It is disastrous to organize it on any other basis. We have no right to try to "sugar-coat the pill"—a phrase I have heard used in connection with this subject—mainly because the religious feature of the junior league is not a pill. It can be and should be attractive of itself, and there should be no possibility of any child, however young, joining the league under a mistaken impression as to its object.

It is an excellent thing to let the junior league be as nearly as possible self-governing. There should be a vital connection between the senior league, if I may so term it, and the juniors, the cabinet preferably appointing the junior league president, but as a rule the control should not be carried beyond that. Trust the juniors. Hands off! They'll not abuse your confidence. My ideal junior league president will give them all the guidance they need. I believe in helping them to habits of self-reliance in the administrative affairs. They delight to indulge in parliamentary practice, and I believe in giving them something tangible on which to work.

Should the junior leagues be self-supporting? Now, you Epworthians, whose *prolegé*, after all, the junior league must be, what shall I say? Ought you to bear the expenses of the juniors? and you, juniors who are directly interested in this matter, what must I answer? Do you think the Epworth League should pay your bills?

There is no clash of interests here. If the juniors are self-governing, they have a perfect right to be self-supporting. And I mean just that. Not a drawing on father or mother for the pennies and

nickels which represent so much hard work. I know that is satisfactory to the seniors, and my experience tells me that the juniors like it better, too.

And now, just a closing word on a much mooted topic. The Epworth League is a Methodist organization. Then how much of Methodist doctrine and discipline should it teach, especially in the junior league? And, being conservative, I answer, "All of it." Teach it all. Not all at once, of course, or all in a year, but don't set any limit short of the entire subject. There is nothing in the discipline that will hurt the juniors, and they ought to know it all some day. Now is the time to begin. —*Epworth Herald*.

THE GIDDY HEIGHT.

BY J. B. GOUGH.

I REMEMBER once seeing in New York City a very beautiful spire to a new church, and just about ten feet from "the ball" a plank was pushed out, with ropes over the ends of the plank. The plank was let down, and the ropes were fastened inside of the window. There was a platform, perhaps five or six feet from this little window, and one hundred and fifty feet from the roadway. I saw a man get out of that window and stand on that little platform. Could you do it? How many persons could do it? He spoke to a man on the side-walk; the man called up to him, and he leant with his hand upon the end and replied to the man upon the pavement. Now, I know that if I had undertaken to stand on that plank, the very moment my foot touched it, and I saw the awful depth beneath—ah! I should have gone down. There would have been no mind, no intellect, no genius, no will, no power on earth, that could have saved me; I must have fallen—to have stood firm would to me have been physically impossible. Now, you might perhaps stand there; but suppose that in so standing you tell me you set me a good example. I say to you, "Stand there, if you like; I have no objection; you may stand there from now till to-morrow morning, or, like Simon Stylites, for thirty years; but do not tell me you set a good example." Now, suppose you induced me to follow your example. You tell me it is safe—"Why, I stand here perfectly safe;" and you induce me to try and follow your example and I fall: what then? Are not your skirts full of my blood? Can you get away from that? "It must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." If you stand there safe yourself, and induce me to stand there and I fall, what then? Why, you say, I am "weak-minded." Well, then, by God's help I will keep off the plank, that's all.

Just one little incident to illustrate my point. At a meeting in a large town in Pennsylvania, at the close of the lecture a gentleman rose, and was announced as Judge So-and-so, Judge of the Quarter Sessions. He said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, before the audience is dismissed, I wish to say a few words in defence of myself and the class I represent. Now it is very hard to have it publicly stated that I set a bad example." The speaker had not said that the moderate drinker set a bad example, but that he did not set a good one. "Now," said he, "I am a moderate drinker. Everybody knows me. I take my glass at home, I take it abroad; I am a moderate drinker, a respectable moderate drinker. Who dare say anything against me? Who ever saw me the worse for drink? Who ever saw me out of the way by drink? If young men followed my example, they would be as I am, respectable and respected. I challenge the town in which I live—I challenge the county—to say whether my example is a bad one. Let young men follow my example, and they will be as I am." A man in the audience cried out, "Give it to him old man; give it to him. Put a header on him." Some one said, "Put that man out." Another gentleman said, "No! let that man remain. He is the only son of the Judge." His only son tried to follow his example, and there was the result. He was so drunk that he would disturb a respectable meeting. And I tell you, sir, and I tell you, madam, every one, from the beginning, who has become a drunkard, has become so by trying to be a moderate drinker and failing.