

the first time in church benevolences and became a powerful ally.

That was the happiest Christmas that the church had ever known. The very spirit of love entered into everything. There was the largest attendance. The decorations were marvellous, the tree a revelation of beauty and the gifts useful and beautiful and covering a large range in value, but all fitting into a right place far exceeding even Mrs. Barton's expectations.

After service the next Sunday the decorations were taken down and distributed among the delighted children and they in turn carried the pretty offerings to wretched homes not represented in any Sunday-school, where they gave an air of holiday cheer to places where cheer of any kind rarely came. The district visitors told of finding them in bare attics and damp basements, and some were even taken to the cemeteries and placed on the graves of loved ones.

'That thought of yours of making Christmas a giving day instead of a receiving day was, as it has turned out, an inspiration,' said one of the doubtful ones to Mrs. Barton not long ago, 'but in a smaller church, or in a country church, where there are not very poor people, it would not work.'

And Mrs. Barton replied: 'Are there not in all communities poor people outside the church who have no affiliations with the church life, who help to make up the large non-church-going community—people, some of them, intelligent and refined, the victims of adverse circumstances? The so-called degenerate element who might be won, not by cold charity, but by Christian love?'

'Let us not leave this work for the lodge, or the temperance union, or some other society, but let us remember that it is the work that Christ left for his followers,' added the pastor.—Annie A. Preston in the Springfield 'Republican.'

The most dangerous place for any man to reach is the summit of his ambitions. The great sin of the Rich Fool consisted not in his acquisition of houses and lands and barns filled 'with much goods laid up for many years,' but in the fact that he cared for nothing but well-filled barns, 'and that he said to his soul, "Take thine ease."' He had reached the top. He wanted nothing more. He took no forward look.—The Rev. F. E. Clarke.

Zeal vs. Discretion.

It is not stinginess, but a valuable and often difficult act of self-denial, to spend no more time or money than one can afford on preparing Christmas gifts for one's friends. There is many a home where the daughter of the house is useless to her mother and everybody else, besides being so nervous from overwork that her society is anything but agreeable, for weeks before the Christmas season; and all because she allows generosity to become slavery in her too ambitious plans for holiday gifts. There are other homes where larger sums are spent on toys, games and other gifts by fond parents than are given during the whole year to all missionary objects. And we may add, there are churches where more energy is given and more money spent in preparing a Christmas festival for the Sunday-school than can be had during all the year for improving the work of the school. Gifts and festivals are all right in their place, but carried to excess they may be all wrong.—'Standard.'

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The Guiding Star.

As with gladness, men of old,
Did Thy guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we
Evermore be led to Thee.

As with joyful steps they sped
To that lowly manger-bed;
As they bend the knee before
Him whom heaven and earth adore;
So may we, with willing feet,
Ever seek Thy mercy-seat.

As they offer'd gifts most rare
At that manger rude and bare;
So may we, with holy joy,

Pure and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ to Thee, our Heavenly King.

Holy Jesus, every day,
Keep us in the narrow way;
And when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last,
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds Thy glory hide.

In the heavenly country bright
Need they no created light,
Thou, its Light, its Joy, its Crown,
Thou its Sun which goes not down;
There for ever may we sing
Alleluias to our King.

—W. C. Dix.

A New Year's Motto.

'LAUNCH OUT.'

(By Theodore L. Cuyler, D.D.)

'Launch out into the deep!' This was Christ's order to Simon Peter after a night of not very successful fishing. Accordingly Peter sets the bow of his little boat towards the deep water where the fish are and after the net has been cast, there is a prodigious haul that requires some extra effort to bring it to shore.

Here is a motto for churches and pastors. 'Launch out!' Perhaps the past year has not been one of much success in winning souls to Christ. One reason probably was that there was not enough effort to reach the unconverted either by fervent preaching to them in the pulpit, or by personal effort with them out of the pulpit. Plain, pointed, pungent sermons warmed with love and steeped in prayer are the minister's needed work on the Sabbath. But such arguments and appeals must be followed up. A pastor often accomplishes as much by an hour of close friendly conversation, as by any amount of pulpit appeal. The Sabbath-school teacher can reach his or her scholars most effectively by a private visit, and a faithful talk with each member of his class. Personal work does the business; not all the fish are caught by the net; each fisher must drop his own hook and line baited with love.

At the beginning of a new year's work the first duty of faith is to make new ventures. 'Launch out,' and with the Holy Spirit's aid make the effort. I would not make too much of the word 'deep,' which in the New Testament incident had only a local significance in fishing. Still there must be a deep down faith in your hearts, and a deep down love of souls, and an insatiate desire for their salvation. Shallow interest, shallow feeling, shallow praying win no souls for the Master. The minister who longs to convert souls must lay hold of the deep truths of God, and strive to penetrate the depths of the heart before him. It is down in those depths that lurk the depravity, the besetting sin or the unbelief that keeps the sinner from Jesus Christ. The truth must go far enough down to reach the roots in order

to produce deep conversion. Spiritual peace, spiritual joy and spiritual power all depend on Christ's getting full possession of the heart.

It is well also to 'launch out' beyond the regular church goes, and to strive to reach the outsiders—even those who may be regarded as 'hard cases.' As in fishing, the fish that bite readily are easily taken, so there are persons brought up under gospel influences that yield more readily to the truth. But the inveterate Sabbath breakers, the open scoffers, the hard drinkers, the profane and openly ungodly class are too often passed by as hopeless. Saul of Tarsus was not a very hopeful case;—cannot the same Divine Spirit that subdued and transformed him, convert the most impenitent and hardened sinner in your community? And when a conspicuously irreligious person in any place is converted, the effect is all the more powerful. Then, my dear friends, if the Master is on board with you—(as he was with Simon Peter)—launch out into the deep and according to your faith, your courage and your loving zeal will be your ingathering of converted souls.

The New Year.

A year of needs! but, oh! thy God can make it
A year of blessings, too!
A year of weakness! do not fear to take it,
He will thy strength renew.
New work, new wants, new yearnings will
arise,
They are but channels for God's new supplies.

A Cardinal Virtue.

The Chinese have one custom deeply rooted in the national life—they settle up accounts at the end of the year. This is a matter of earnest, honest endeavor with the average Chinaman, and no common reason will induce him to carry over this year's debts into the New Year. Might not other nations take a leaf from China's book? At all events, cannot each individual make it a point of honor that debts shall be settled then? What widening circles of cheer, goodwill and hopefulness would this set in motion!—Selected.