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PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK.

Vol. XX.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 29, 1900.

No. 52.



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.

Another Year

Another year is dawning . . . Dear Master let it be . . . In working or in waiting . . . Another year with Thee.

Another year of leaning . . . Upon thy loving breast . . . Of ever deepening trustfulness . . . Of quiet, happy rest.

Another year of mercies . . . Of faithfulness and grace . . . Another year of gladness . . . In the shining of Thy face.

Another year of progress . . . Another year of praise ; . . . Another year of proving . . . Thy presence "all the days."

Another year of service . . . Of witness for Thy love ; . . . Another year of training . . . For holier work above.

Another year is dawning ; . . . Dear Master let it be . . . On earth, or else in heaven . . . Another year for thee.

OUR PERIODICALS:

Table listing various periodicals such as Christian Guardian, Methodist Magazine, and others with their respective prices.

WILLIAM BRIGGS,

Metropolitan Book and Publishing House, Toronto, Ont. C. W. Coates, 217 St. Catherine St., Montreal. G. F. Hiram, Wesleyan Book Room, Halifax, N.S.

Pleasant Hours:

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK. Rev. W. H. Withrow, D.D., Editor.

TORONTO, DECEMBER 29, 1900.

1901.

We have come to January's gates, which will open before us into 1901. With the keeper of the gate we look back whence we have come, over the year and the years behind, and forward whither we go into the year and years ahead. Into the years, for not only are we living behind the old year, but with every day of the new year upon which we are about to enter we will be leaving behind us the hundred years of the nineteenth century. With the year 1900 we will bid farewell to this century. The thought of having to leave the nineteenth century and enter the twentieth is as bewildering as a great reckoning in a small room. We speak of it now as "our century," sometimes proudly, sometimes sorrowfully, when we compare the things of it with the things of past centuries. A great multitude of us will perhaps always regard it as the twentieth century, as our nineteenth century critics have so often said of many great ones who ended their lives in the first quarter of this century. The closing years of the nineteenth century have certainly been eventful ones. The pace has been quickened at the close, as if we wished to get as far forward as possible. The last twenty-five years have been ones of unexampled progress and prosperity, and last year was not one of the least progressive. Certainly, for the Anglo-Saxon race it has been a wonderful year. Young, prosperous with a magnificent inheritance, and with splendid prospects, Canada is advancing to the front among the nations. If Canadians

will remember that it is righteousness which exalteth a nation, the future of our country is assured.—Adapted from The Wesleyan

LAYING FOUNDATIONS.

BY MAIDA MATLAND.

The Ross boys had received a very handsome gift, a box full of Norman architecture, and on a rainy November day, Aunt Laurie found them all much interested in the building of a castle with an elaborate tower. Before she saw it, the boys and girls were quite as interested as the boys, and by her skillful aid the tower had almost reached completion, when, lo!—the whole structure lay in ruins at their feet.

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"John Langdon, whom your father was compelled to disengage from the office last year, did not look after this part of the foundation of his character house. So, although he was a good boy in many respects, and might have made a success as a business man, this one bad fault of untruthfulness, overthrew his whole house."

"So you see if our building is to be a success at all, we must lay sure and firm the great stones. Then the other one is Unfaithfulness. Nothing makes a boy so much disliked as being selfish."

"The other day in one of our schools the teacher asked her class to write a composition asking for three things they would like. The boys and girls asked for every imaginary thing that would give pleasure in their homes, but one very selfish and lazy boy wrote this:

"I wish I had a pony (because I have a bicycle), to ride round town and be able to crow over the fellows walking. Second—I want a sister, all grown up, to wait on me and mend my cloths, and third—I want a hipopotamus to ride on the grass, so I won't have to run the lawn mower."

"The selfish, lazy duffer," came from Jack, in a disgusted tone, "I'd like to walk on a horse, that's all."

"We'd help," came in a chorus from the others, as they all joined in the laugh.

All right, then," their aunt continued, "We'll all agree that the stone of Selfishness must not find a place in our building."

"A nurse was telling me the other day about being in a home where a dear little fellow lay dying, and in leaving the room quickly she came across his little sister kneeling in a corner and praying:

"Dear God, don't bother at all about me, but do comfort poor father and mother."

"Wasn't she a dear wee thing?" Hamilton asked, with strong approval in his voice.

"Yes, she had fitted in that stone of Unselfishness, and it was making her building look very beautiful."

The talk had lasted until the tea-bell rang, and as the little ones went quietly to their beds, each one of them there was marked the determination to build his house on the rock that would withstand all life's storms. Which, dear young reader, are you building?

Ottawa, Ont.

BY LOTS OUT.

BY LOUIS ALBERT BARKS.

"I will blot out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions."

There is a story told of a boy who ran to his mother one day after he had read that promise, and said:

"Mother, God mean when he says he will blot out my sins? What is he going to do with them? I can't see how God can really blot them out and put them away. What does it mean—'blot out'?"

The wise mother said to the boy, "Didn't I see you yesterday writing on your slate?"

"Yes," he said, "I did."

"Why, mother, I don't know. I know it was there, and it is gone."

"Well," she said, "that is what God means when he says, 'I will blot out thy transgressions.'"

And so God will blot out your transgressions, dark and black and heavy though they are, if you come to him in repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, who has died to save you. You know just what it was done, your sorrows will be gone, your rebuking conscience will have peace, and God will have freed you from your chains of evil habits.

THE OLD YEAR AND THE NEW.

A REFLECTION FOR DECEMBER 31.

We have come to the last day of the old year. To-morrow will begin a new year, and God grant that it may be a happy New Year for us all!

Do you want to know the secret of a happy New Year? I think it is given by the text from the book of Proverbs: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." This is a good motto for the new year. We want to be led by God himself through all the days of the coming year. Here is the precious promise: "If we trust in God and obey him in all things, he will guide our footsteps in the right path."

NOT ANOTHER YEAR.

A new year, not simply another year. Many people may be said to live the same year over and over again. Each succeeding year is the same unit added once more to the sum of life. There is the same task, performed in the same spirit, with the same motive; the same impulsive character, the same failures of conduct. The times may change and progress hasten, but if we stand still we live only the same old year over again. A new year never comes to the contented one who always repeats. It is not the lapse of time, or progress of civilization, but our progress, that makes possible to us a new year.

When Christ was born there appeared upon the earth "the perfect Brother." Christ came to save. He saves to serve. He took upon himself the form of a servant, and now calls: "Follow me!" The star of Bethlehem was and is a beaming star. It means that we are in the rest, and himself or herself forgotten. This is the Christmas spirit. Thanks be to God, this spirit is very busy in the world. It is at the root of all that is noble and good in the world. It is the spirit of brotherly kindness of the poor to one another, and in the thrill of response that true brotherliness always evokes. It throbs in the passion for liberty that is so rapidly permeating the peoples of all lands, and in the sickening horror of slavery. Let us strive for the things of Christ, strive to bring in the perfect and universal brotherhood.

A little boy in Scotland became blind. His parents sent him to school to keep him out of mischief. The only reading book the scholars used was the Bible. At the end of each chapter and each verse. By constantly hearing these readings, the boy Aleck soon learned many of the verses and could tell where they were. When he was asked to read a verse, he knew the whole of the Bible by heart. If a person repeated any passages of Scripture, he would tell them the chapter and verse. One day a man repeated a verse which Aleck had in it. Aleck told him where it was, but he said he had not correctly repeated it. The man asked for the nineteenth verse of the seventh chapter of Numbers, and Aleck said, "You are looking for it there, but in no such verse; that chapter has but eighty-nine verses." Although "his eyes were blind, God had opened the eyes of his heart so that he could see an understanding in his mind. He had more than many people who had two good eyes. This is what David meant when he said, "Open thine mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

Tennyson's New Year's Hymn.

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky, The flying cloud, the frosty light; The year is dying in the night; Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new, Ring, happy bells, across the snow. The year is going, let him go; Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind, For those that rich we see no more; Ring out the feud of rich and poor, Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause, And ancient forms of party strife; Ring in the nobler modes of life, With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin, The faithless coldness of the times; Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes, But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood, The civic rancor and the spite; Ring in the love of truth and right, Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease; Ring out the narrowing lust of gold; Ring out the thousand wars of old, Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free, The larger heart, the kinder hand; Ring out the darkness of the land, Ring in the Christ that is to be.

What Will You Do?

What will you do with the New Year?
The question is asked to-day,
To you who are travelling onward,
To the land that is far away,
The old year is gone forever—
It has bid you a last adieu;
Ah, children dear! consider,
What will you do with the New!

Do you wish for a happy New Year,
Without one anxious care?
Then turn to the face of Jesus—
Lift up your soul in prayer,
Trust yourself to his keeping,
Follow him as your guide,
Willingly work in his vineyard,
Closer press to his side.

Do you wish for a holy New Year!
Then sit at the Master's feet,
And ask for his Holy Spirit
To guide your faltering feet;
Then resting upon his promise,
Without a doubt or fear,
You may step out with gladness
Into the fair New Year.

OLD ALMANACS FOR THE NEW YEAR.

Sometimes we hear it said, of one thing or another, that it is "as useless as last year's almanac." But I know a man who treasures old almanacs as worth a thousand times more to him than the same number of this year's almanacs would be, and I myself greatly prize an old pocket-memorandum book of the year 1867. On the margin of the calendar, opposite the 1st of July, is written the word "Hurrah!" I enjoy reading that. A useless calendar it may be in one sense, but I would not sell it for a car-load of those of 1900. Why not? Has it still a purpose to serve?

On New Year's Eve, in the quaint old German city of Nuremberg, the lighted windows along the deserted streets tell of festivities indoors until the bell of the ancient church peals out its first stroke of twelve. Then the fun-loving Nurembergers come rushing out, making the streets resound with all manner of clatter and din. Immediately bonfires begin to blaze all through the town. The ancient city wall, the many-windowed, many-gabled roofs of mediæval houses (some of which were the abode of men like Durer, Sachs, Krafft, Vischer, and Peller), the ancient castle, with its five-cornered tower, the Hangman's Bridge, the "Beautiful Fountain" in the market-place,—all these are aglow with the jolly flicker of scores of bonfires, fed by thousands of—what? Last year's almanacs! It is said that the demand for these almanacs during the last few days of the old year is so great that the shopkeepers carry a large stock to meet it. Old almanacs "to burn," sure enough! And why not? Have they not served their purpose?

I asked why the old almanacs should not be treasured, and now I ask why they should not be burned. Both questions suggest an important truth for the new year. If I tell you what that truth is, it will not be worth so much to you as if you work it out for yourself.

In the meantime, let us note that Moses advises the children of Israel to "ask not of the days that are past," and David says, "I remember the days of old," although Paul says, "Forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on."

SEEKING AFTER GOD IN JAPAN.

In her lesson one day a young Japanese came to the word "Creator," but did not know its meaning. Turning to the dictionary, she read, "Creator, one who creates;" but was still in the dark. She turned up a larger dictionary and read: "Creator, one who creates; a name given to God, who made all things." A startling thought to her, for she had never

heard of such a God; and it filled her mind by night and by day. She looked at the stars and said, "that God must have made all these stars." The sun and even the trees suggested the thought, God made them. She went to the temple and looked at the image of Buddha, and she said to herself, "It is not you, Buddha, for I never heard you made anything."

When she went to Tokyo an old woman in the same house said to her: "Tasshee, I am going to a meeting, come with me."

"What meeting?"
"A meeting to hear about God."
"Oh, no," said Tasshee, "I do not want any of your gods. I have a God of my own, if I only knew where he is."

Tasshee, however, went to the meeting. The missionary opened the Bible and read, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Tasshee was startled. "Why," she said, "this is the God I am looking for," and she became so agitated that she could hardly keep her seat, and so eager was she to put the question, "Where is he?"

When the meeting was over she rushed to the missionary and said, "Tell me, where is this God that made the heaven and the earth?" Her desire was met by proper instruction. She came to the next meeting and heard, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begot-

AN INTERESTING ITEM ABOUT JAPAN.

In Japan there are no cows; the Japanese neither drink milk nor eat meat. There are but few horses, and these are imported mainly for foreigners; there are but few dogs, and these are neither used as watchdogs, beasts of burden, nor in hunting; there are no sheep, and wool is not used in clothing—silk and cotton being the staples. There are no pigs; pork is an unknown article of diet. There are no goats, mules or donkeys in Japan.

Twice a year the adherents of the Shinto faith in Japan cut small figures out of paper and throw them into the river, the idea being that with the immersion of these figures their own sins are washed away.

The Shinto priests of Japan scrupulously practice cleanliness in their religious service. Their garments are always spotless, and they even bind a slip of paper over their mouths so that their breath may not pollute the offering.

Japan claims the oldest wooden building in the world. It is a log storehouse of Yara, that is now used to shelter some of the Mikado's art treasures. An age of one thousand two hundred years is claimed for it. Some of the logs are nearly worn away by the weather.—Selected.

The sick man watched the wood first send out little puffs of smoke, and then burst into flame, and replied: "Of course not; it's burning itself!"

"And so are you when you warm yourself with alcohol; you are literally burning up the delicate tissues of your stomach and brain."

Oh, yes; alcohol will warm you up, but who finds the fuel? When you take food, that is fuel, and as it burns out you keep warm. But when you take alcohol to warm you, you're like a man who sets his house on fire and warms his fingers by it as it burns.

A New Leaf.

He came to my desk with a quivering lip—

The lesson was done.
"Dear teacher, I want a new leaf," he said;

"I have spoiled this one."
In place of the leaf so stained and blotted,

I gave him a new one, all unspotted,
And into his sad eyes smiled—
"Do better now, my child."

I went to the throne with a quivering soul—

The old year was done.
"Dear Father, hast thou a new leaf for me?"

I have spoiled this one."
He took the old leaf, stained and blotted,
And gave me a new one, all unspotted,
And into my sad heart smiled—
"Do better now, my child."
—Anon.



Ring Happy Bells Across the Snow

Ring out the old, ring in the new—
Ring, happy bells, across the snow.
The year is going—let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring in the vallant man and free,
The larger heart, the kinder hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

ten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here again Tasshee was startled. A God of love! Her gods were gods of hate, of revenge, of anger. This God gave his Son. All the gods she had ever heard of never gave anything; the people had to give them offerings.

This thirsting soul received the water of life. Tasshee is now a Christian teacher, dispensing the water of life to others, telling them of a God who spared not His own Son, but gave him up for us all.—Church at Home and Abroad.

LIKE A HOUSE AFIRE.

A patient was urging with his doctor the necessity of his taking a stimulant. He argued that he was weak, and needed it. Said he:

"But, doctor, I must have some kind of a stimulant. I am cold and it warms me."

"Precisely," came the doctor's crusty answer. "See here, this stick is cold," taking up a stick of wood from the box beside the hearth and tossing it into the fire, "now it is warm; but is the stick benefited?"

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