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AND SIGNS OF OUR TIMES

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Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, D.D., Editor.



EIGHTEEN-NINETY-EIGHT.

Hail! New-born Year, in the Cradle of Time!
The Guardian Angel of Hope and Love,

In tenderest blessing bends above,
While the old year dies with the midnight chime.

Wake! Glad New Year and with lavish hand,
Spread joy and happiness over the land.—James Clarence Harvey.



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Plenty of Denominations.

THE newspapers have recently given reports of the annual meetings of the denominations of churches. Those who have not closely observed have no idea of the great number of religious sects. I understand there are about forty different kinds of Presbyterians—Presbyterians who sing only the Psalms of David, and Presbyterians who sing anything they like; Presbyterians who like instrumental music, and Presbyterians who are shocked at sound of organ or bass viol; Presbyterians with gowns, and Presbyterians without gowns; Campbelite Presbyterians, and Cumberland Presbyterians; New School Presbyterians and Old School Presbyterians; United and Reformed Dutch Presbyterians; long Presbyterians and short Presbyterians; white Presbyterians, black Presbyterians, and copper-colored Presbyterians. These little distinctions keep up expensive secretaryships and expensive ecclesiastical courts, and millions of dollars are wasted in running machinery that might do the work with far fewer wheels and less hands. What we want now is fewer denominations. The Methodist Church divided into the Methodist Episcopal and Protestant Episcopal, and Wesleyan Methodists and Calvinistic Methodists need to come under one banner. In villages where they have a Baptist Church and a Congregational Church, and a Methodist Church, and a Lutheran Church, and an Episcopalian Church, and a Presbyterian Church with their six edifices sparsely attended, and their six ministers standing by, they want one great church with one stout minister. As it is, every man who gets a cross-belt in his hand wants to start a denomination, and the Christian God is losing its power by multiplying it through so many channels. Better all concentrate. If you quarrel about these things, and if the members of religious bodies and the laity are in doubt as to which one of the church might possibly disappear, and as to whether a little chapel or two might not be the New Jerusalem, and as to whether the great central church has more it happens to be larger than some. No one of these sects in itself would be fong out of heaven upon its founder. We must go there at last, and if you will, we will give you a little paper, perhaps made up of Old Hundred, Antioch, Ceresiana, and The Hallelujah

Chorus: "Unto Him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God—unto Him be glory in the church throughout all ages, world without end."

Epidemic of Crime.

WERE the newspapers ever so full of swindles, burglaries, arson, accidents? There are times when these things seem to be epidemic. One railroad disaster, then there will be four or five railroad disasters. One shipwreck, then four or five shipwrecks. One bank broken open, then three or four banks broken open. Swindle in Washington, then there is one startling New York and another startling Philadelphia, and another, Boston. How account for these? Easily. The shipwrecks easily accounted for, because vessels are caught in the same cyclone. Railroad disasters accounted for, perhaps, by wide frosts snapping the rails. But I think the epidemic of crime is a result of much newspaper-reading on that subject. The newspapers must record the crimes in order that police and sheriffs and courts may be helped in their duty and society warned against ruffianism and all forms of misdoing; but those people who gorge their minds with criminal information and pick out from among instructive editorial and cheerful news only the abhorrent and the disgraceful, are fitting themselves for like misdemeanors. Morbid natures ought by all means to stand off from such perusal. People misanthropic and disgusted with life, reading of some one who put an end to his own miserable existence, bethink themselves of the pistol. People charmed with the story of audacious crime, bethink themselves of attempting midnight adventures.

Keep your mind pure and your life pure. Dig that out of your newspaper which will make you wiser, stronger, gentler. The wheel of the printing press may roll you on to duty, or roll over you, a crushing juggernaut. The story of one skillful and captivating crime may brood fifty other crimes. This accounts for the epidemic of misdemeanors. Any one week's record of the criminal courts would make us despair of the purification of society had we not full faith in the Gospel to rectify. On that, society is to be reconstructed, all wrongs righted, and the long, sleepless, suffocating night of the world's sin and sullerling turned into a spring morning—balsamic, arborescent, and irradiated. Together the lion and the lamb. Together the vulture and the dove. Peace, universal peace, everlasting peace, heaven's prolonged echo.

Greed and Gouge.

HOW many instances we have of people who, trying to gain too much, lose all they have. Their best prototype was Ahab. He had a great empire. His palace was an ivory palace, its adornments made from the tusks of African and Asiatic elephants; stairs of ivory, pillars of ivory, fountains falling into basins of ivory. But he looked out of his window and saw a vineyard that he thought would make him a good vegetable garden. But Naboth, the owner, would not sell it. So Ahab went to bed and turned his face to the wall and pouted. His wife, Jezebel, came in and said: "What are you pouting about?" He replied, "Naboth won't sell me his vineyard for a vegetable garden, and I am too disappointed to live." "I will get that vegetable garden," cried Jezebel. So she hired two perfumers to swear that Naboth was guilty of blasphemy. For that he was killed. But the prophet said to Ahab: "As the dogs lick the blood of Ahab, so shall the dogs lick thy blood." Soon after Ahab was slain in battle; and as the dogs waited on the carcass of Ahab, so the dogs waited on the carcass of Jezebel. That man waited just one thing more. He lost palace, throne, empire, life itself, in getting a vegetable garden.

THE NEW YEAR.

TIME is a great underminer. Every year that passes over us sees the foundations of the house of life more and more weakened; and in some hour—which we are constantly going forward to meet—all this fair fabric of humanity will crumble into dust. Then happy will it be for those who have a building—"not made with hands"—whose foundations are in the heavens.

The season of the New Year is particularly adapted to solemn review and reconsecration, and we are led to this by various motives and for various purposes. We remember the uncertainty of our ever seeing another New Year. Job said: "When a few years are gone, I shall go the way whence I shall not return." But we have no assurance of even these few years; for who among all the sons and daughters of men hath seen to-morrow? And yet it is our privilege to stand on the threshold of the New Year and through the mist which veleth our to-come, see by faith the city of our desire—"the city where the sealed tribes are met," the "land which is very far off"—and the splendor of that resurrection morn which shall usher in the year of eternity, of whose days there shall be no end.

At the New Year, it is also good to say with the chief butler: "I do not remember my sins this day." And it is equally good to forget the sins of others. Now is the time to enter into our chambers, and say in words that are heart-deep: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." For this is the beginning of a new campaign against our known and besetting sins. Are we going to renew their lease and let them riot another year in our soul's guest-chamber? Or are we going to sweep and garnish it, and open the door to Him who has so long stood knocking, saying:

Turn in my Lord, turn in to me; My heart's a homely place; But thou canst make corruption flee, And fill it with thy grace.

Yea, dear Lord, if it be needed, renew the miracles of old, and come in, "the doors being shut."

Good resolutions may begin with ourselves; but they cannot end there. The better we are personally, the better we shall be relatively. As soon as we resolve with Joshua: "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord," the four walls of our dwellings will be too small to contain us. We shall hunt out the ignorant, the sinful, the sorrowful, and seek to strengthen the weak hands, and guide the erring feet, and comfort those appointed unto death, bidding them

Weep not; for unto you is given, To watch for the coming of his feet, Who is the Glory of our blessed heaven. The work and watching will be very sweet, Even in an earthly home; And in such an hour as ye think not, He will come!

For our religion is not a dreamy system of creeds and theories. It is a wondrous revelation sublimated into grand facts. And it is this union of ideas and facts that is the glory of Christianity. And thus we must prove our faith, our love, and our good resolutions by a love for all humanity, which shall be an imitation of Christ's love in its unselfishness and universality.

Redeeming the time, suffering none of the fragments to be lost, let us consider how much of this precious commodity we can save and put out at interest. Is there not many a half-hour idled away in bed after the demands of nature are satisfied? How much can be saved from vain conversation, gossiping visits, and unnecessary toilet demands? For it is well to consume the passing days, as though they would never return; and if we do this, we have no fear for the future. And it is not difficult to do it; for

So nigh is grandeur to our dust, So near is God to man, When Duty whispers low, Thou must, The Soul replies, I can.

What this year will bring forth is known only to Him who doeth all things well. We may consider the year before us as a desk containing 365 letters addressed to us, one for every day, announcing its trials and prescribing its employments, with an order to open daily no letter but the letter for the day. We may be strongly tempted to unseal beforehand some of the remainder; but this would be unwise, for if we knew beforehand the trials and scenes through which we should have to pass, our hearts would fail us for very fear. Yet when the events do come, we shall have been unconsciously prepared for them, and be both ready to meet them and to receive profit from them.

For, although we go on, not knowing the way we go, we are not left ignorant of what is necessary for our comfort. "He will guide us with his counsel," and we know "He is faithful who has promised." "Our bread shall be given, and our water sure." Our "shoes shall be iron and brass, and as our days our strength shall be." "When we go through the fire or the water he will be with us." Through the valley of the shadow of death

he will not forsake us, and when "we awake we shall be satisfied with his likeness."

"For, one by one We rise and quit the happy table spread With countless blessings; and we leave behind The warmth and brightness of our home, the dear Familiar voices of our earthly life. And pass, at one quick step, into the heart—the sad heart of that night unknown. We feel The chill wind from the valley creep, and hear The river moan and menace us, with sound Of woe and change.

"Yet see, dear friends, O see! How brief the darkness!—but one faltering step Into the night—and then the Master's door Set wide in welcome! Joyful light and love Smiling upon us; radiant far beyond Our brightest dreams; and more than all—the Hand Once wounded, stretched to draw us from the night, Forever to the home of cloudless day."

And in such trust and friendship as this, all the days of 1898 must be good days; and all its events make up the sum of a Happy Year.

Amelia. L. Parr BRIEF NOTES.

Some of our Subscribers are under the impression that all our Premiums are sent by mail, and complain of the non-arrival of Premiums, before they have inquired at the Express Office. Eight out of every ten complaints can be adjusted by a simple inquiry at the Express Office.

The Canadian Post-office promises to signalize the new year by carrying letters to Great Britain and British Colonies at three cents per ounce, which is now the rate of domestic postage in the Dominion.

The British and Foreign Bible Society established in 1804, has published 131,000,000 volumes at a cost of \$30,000,000. The American Bible Society established in 1816, has published 63,000,000 at a cost of \$27,000,000, and other societies 51,000,000; making a total of 265,000,000.

The Baptist mission work in Cuba has been at a standstill during the war. The preachers have had to leave the island, but the property is securely held for the mission. There are twenty-one preachers and helpers, and two thousand five hundred members who were scattered by the war.

Superintendent L. A. Vail of the Union Gospel Mission, New Orleans, writes us that a revival is in progress there. Open-air services are being held in various parts of the city and many souls are being won. Mr. Vail asks the prayers of our readers for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Mr. Moody has given up for the present his evangelistic work in Pittsburg. There is no building available large enough for his meetings. The Exposition Building which he expected to use cannot be properly heated. It is understood that he will return sometime this year when arrangements have been made for a more suitable place.

There are in Chicago, according to a circular issued by the Congregational City Missionary Society, 583 churches with 153,520 members. This does not include 29 Unitarian, Universalist and Jewish and 106 Catholic churches. The table shows the Lutherans in the lead in point of numbers, the Methodists second, the Baptists third, the Congregationalists fourth, and the Presbyterians fifth.

A new Home for Working Girls has been opened in New York at 210 East Fourteenth street. Mrs. Morrell, who is conducting it, is well known in rescue work in the city. Her experience convinced her that if working girls could find a cheap boarding house, conducted under Christian auspices, many might be saved from sinking into a condition in which they would need rescue. Her hope is to make the home a preventive institution.

A notable decision has been rendered by the law courts of Ceylon. An Englishman in that island announced his conversion to Mohammedanism, and soon afterward married a second wife, his first wife being still alive. When arrested for bigamy he pleaded that as a Mohammedan he was entitled to have four wives if he wished. The court held that his status in Ceylon was that of an Englishman on whom monogamy is binding.

U. S. Consul Wallace at Jerusalem reports to the State Department that, according to the consular records of his office, it appears that there are 530 citizens of the United States residing in Palestine. Of this number 458 are Jews, who are nominally Americans, having lived in the United States just long enough to obtain citizen papers and passports. The majority of these emigrated from Russia to the United States and thence to Palestine.

Rev. S. H. Chesler, now on a visit to China, writes to the Missionary Review: "If I should sign my name and title as arranged for me here, in Chinese, it would be Mei Kwob Nan Chinglao Tsoong Hwuy Pudoao Shook Keh-szeteh; which, being interpreted, means, "American Kingdom Southern Presbyterian General Assembly Mission Secretary—the man who meditates on virtue." The last two syllables, "s-zeteh" are the nearest approach the language affords to my name.

Mr. D. L. Moody has consented, at the earnest request of Christian friends in New York, to hold services in Carnegie Music Hall, West Fifty-seventh street. The first service will be held on Sunday, January 9th, at 3 P. M. In the evening at 8 o'clock a service will be held in the same place for men only. Services will be held there every day from January 10th to Friday, January 14th inclusive, at 10:30 A. M. and 3 P. M. On Sunday, January 16th, there will be services at 3 and 8 P. M. Everybody welcome.

An excellent address was given at the Broadway Tabernacle, New York, on Dec. 22, by Dr. Keeskar, the distinguished Hindoo physician of Sholapur, India. Dr. Keeskar's address attracted several impressions, as to life in India, which are prevalent in this country, and contained much interesting information. He hopes to take back to India with him an American organ for the Sunday school at Sholapur, of which he is superintendent. About fifty dollars is needed to complete the purchase. It would greatly be the worthy doctor very much if Christian friends here would help him to make up that amount.