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The New Year

Lucian Minor

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THE NEW YEAR.

In commencing the fourth volume and fourth year of the *Messenger*, we have somewhat to say beyond a mere holiday salutation to subscribers, readers, and contributors.

While we cannot look back upon the past with unmingled satisfaction, we yet derive from it some pleasing thoughts; and much cheering hope for the future. Some useful and elegant talent has been called into exercise, nay, it may be said, has been created; since such is the power of exercise over the faculties, that to afford an attractive field for their exertion is in a great degree to create them. Some new and valuable truths have been promulgated through our columns; and a yet larger number of truths not new, has doubtless been presented in forms more engaging or impressive than before, and has thus been stamped beneficially upon many a mind. Some books, worthy to be read, have been pointed out to the reader's notice; and some unworthy ones have been marked, so that he might not misspend his money and time upon them. And if no other good had been done,—many an hour, of many a young person, which might otherwise have been given to hurtful follies, has by our pages been whiled away in harmless at least, if not salutary enjoyment. So little ascetic are we, as to hold, that whoever furnishes mankind with an innocent recreation, is a public benefactor.

But the past is nothing, except as a help to the future. We are earnestly desirous to render the *Messenger* a vehicle of LIGHT; of useful truth; of moral improvement; of enlightened taste. To some extent, it has been so already: but to an extent commensurate neither with our wishes, nor with the fund of talent slumbering in the community around us.

The mineral wealth of Virginia is a trite theme of expatiation. It is unquestionably immense. But the mines of Southern intellect, all unwrought, and many of them unknown even by their proprietors, far surpass those of matter, both in number, and in the richness of their buried treasures. Not to speak of persons to whom the ample page of knowledge, 'rich with the spoils of time,' has never been unrolled, there exists, southward of the Potomac, a mass of cultivated mind sufficient, with only a little industry and care in practising

the art of composition, to fill twenty such magazines as this, with instruction and delight. Few are aware, how improvable the faculty is, of expressing thoughts upon paper. The gigantic increase of the muscles in a blacksmith's arm, from his wielding the hammer so frequently; the proverbial strengthening of the memory by exercise; or the miraculous sleight which the juggler acquires by practice with his cups and balls; is not more certain than that he who daily habituates himself to writing down his ideas with what ease, accuracy, and elegance he can, will find his improvement advance with hardly any assignable limit. Nor will only his style improve. It is a truth so hackneyed, that only its importance rescues it from contempt and emboldens us to utter it, that "in learning to write with accuracy and precision, we learn to think with accuracy and precision." Besides this, the store of thought is in a two-fold way enlarged. By the action of the mind in turning over, analyzing, and comparing its ideas, they are incalculably multiplied. And the researches prompted by the desire to write understandingly upon each subject, are constantly widening and deepening the bounds of knowledge.

Thus, whether the conscious possessor of talents desire to enrich and invigorate his own mind, or to act with power upon the minds of others; we say to him "WRITE."

The *Messenger* is a medium, through which, the best talents need not disdain to commune with the public. Whatever it contains, worthy to be read, finds not less than ten thousand readers; besides those whom republications procure. And most of these (it is a pardonable vanity to say) are such readers as any author may well be proud to have. Where is the orator so gifted, that he might not glory in addressing so numerous an auditory of the enlightened, the fair, the exalted in station!

By all these powerful considerations then,—by the desire of self-improvement—by an honorable ambition—by disinterested patriotism—by the pure wish to diffuse light and to do good,—we invoke the dormant talents of the South (especially) to rouse up from their slumber, and employ the means now offered them, of assisting to mould and fashion the age, if not of leaving names, which a distant posterity will contemplate with grateful veneration.