

A New Year's Tale.

BY A DAUGHTER OF ENGLAND.

It was late one evening in December that two gentlemen were sitting in a richly-furnished room, with wine and dried fruits before them. Both looked somewhat confused in their intellects, but Mr. Fleming, the master of the house, was the most so. The sound of footsteps aroused both. "They are coming in I think, they must join our party," said Mr. Fleming.

"Pray, how do you like that youth; Hall do not you call him; steady I should think he was," enquired the other gentleman vacantly.

"Oh, he will do," answered Mr. Fleming, "a little too particular, that is all; he will not take even a glass of wine, such nonsense; I shall try to get him off it if I can; he is obedient, and—but here he comes." The door opened, and two fine youths came in.

"Well, my son, have you had a pleasant walk?"

"Oh, yes, rather a cold one though," answered young Fleming.

"Well, well, come to the table both of you, here are fruits and wines. Stay, Hall, let me look at you, fairly frozen I declare; take a glass of this good wine, it will do you good. Henry, fill your glass. Come Hall, wish us all a happy New Year."

"I will, Sir, with all my heart, but not in wine," answered James Hall.

"Don't talk such folly, James, I will not have it in my house. You are now entering society, leave all your ridiculous promises and ideas now; you are no longer to think yourself a boy. Come, take a glass of wine, and show yourself a man; it is my wish, it is my command that you do."

"Any thing but this, Sir; I cannot obey."

"Drink boy, drink."

"I dare not, will not," cried the youth in strong agitation, as he pushed the glass from him, and arose.

Mr. Fleming's passion had been rising before, and inflamed by liquor, he could scarcely govern it enough to say, "Consider yourself discharged."

"I am sorry, Sir," said poor James sadly.

"Do you understand me?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Then leave the room."

That was a sad night for young Hall. There seemed a disgrace in being thus turned away. He was the eldest of the family, what would his brothers say? This place had been found for him with great difficulty, and to be thus lost, was a heavy trial indeed. But the sense of having done his duty, soothed the bitterness of these feelings, and he began to consider what plan to pursue. His heart yearned towards his home; it was long now since he had been there, and he could reach it by New Year's Eve—that night which his father held as a festival, and when all his sons, who were near enough to do so, assembled once more under the roof of their childhood's home.

It was the last day of the Old Year, a little snow was on the ground, and the sun was shining brilliantly in at the

windows of a respectable mansion, where a certain degree of bustle was going on, both upstairs and down. Rooms were put in readiness, stoves lighted, the large closet that held all Mamma's valuables was thrown open, and Mamma, herself, might be seen opening sundry jars of preserved fruits and mincemeat, arranging dishes of sweetmeats, and ornamenting the huge sugar-crowned Christmas cake. In the large handsome parlor, were two young girls, hanging festoons of green boughs all around the walls, entwining them round the pictures, the mirror, and the mantle-piece.

"Agnes," suddenly cried Fanny, a laughing girl of 16, to her elder sister, "What did Papa ask Frank Campbell to come to-night for?"

"Because he and James were so much attached to each other; that is the reason; I heard Papa say so. But you are not sorry, Fan; young Campbell is a nice lively companion."

"Oh, yes, he is, sister, a very lively companion indeed." And the young girl bent lower over her work, to hide the flush that rose to her cheek.

There was a few minutes' silence, and then Agnes cried, "Oh, I wonder how many of our brothers will come. James cannot, poor fellow, he is so far away; and dear noisy Hal, we shall not have him either, for he never said he would come when he wrote last, and he would have been sure to, had he meant to be here."

"Well, never mind, sister, we shall see Charles, and William, and poor little Tom, and our two cousins, and—Frank Campbell. See, dear Agnes, they will certainly have a fine day."

It was now Eve, New Year's Eve; a bright group was gathered in that parlour. There was Charles and William, the twin brothers; and young Tom, the last from home, was standing by mamma's side, her youngest and her pet. Just before tea, the door opened, and amidst general exclamations of surprise and pleasure, James Hall entered; even in the moment of greeting, all felt that something was wrong with the youth; but before they could multiply questions, James turned to his parents, and sadly, but ingeniously, confessed the whole truth. Hardly had he time to end, when a buzz of voices arose—"well done," "bravely done, James," "you have proved yourself a MAN, Hall," were exclamations repeated all round; but James felt the most satisfaction when his father placed both his hands on his boy's curly head, saying, "Thank God, my son, you have done your duty." Then, mamma led the new comer to the table; and carefully avoiding all allusion to what they felt was a sore subject, tried all their efforts to make the conversation cheerful. Tea was now announced; the urn hissed, the toasts smoked, the cakes shone, and all the young eyes were turned on the large Christmas cake, which stood, resplendent with ornaments, in the centre of the table. With the keen appetites of youth, they all clustered round the board, when a bustle was heard in the hall, a step sounded at the door, and a merry voice exclaimed—

"A Happy New Year—a Happy New Year."

"It is Hal," "It is Hal," was the general cry; and Mr. Hall, turning eagerly round, said, "Why, my dear Henry, we never hoped to see you here."