

for action? Are your plans laid for the gratification and aggrandisement of self, or for the glory of God?"

The doctor was silent; and the calm, earnest voice went on.

"Be what your talents call you to be, my brother; but in that sphere live for the glory of the Supreme! O Herbert, is it not well at the commencement of another year to pause and question the past, as to the noblest way of using all those hours, and days, and months, which shall make up its whole? Already have six hundred priceless minutes of the New year passed away. What is the record and the promise they have borne to the eternal throne? Is it that all you have is consecrated to heaven; that in the future every talent shall be used for God; that the pure service of the King of kings shall be despised no longer? Is it that you have been awakened to the perception of the truly noble in life, the truly sublime in death, and that henceforth you will 'seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness?' Or is it that the aggrandisement of *self*, the blind idolatry of *self*, the elevation of *self* in the eyes of a giddy crowd,—whose mockery of friendship you cannot but despise,—have to-day received the offer of another year's allegiance?"

The doctor followed Julia's example, and stared into the fire as if a New Year's prophecy were written in its glare. After awhile he spoke more seriously than before, and with a touch of sadness in his tone. Well, well, your path is best, dear William, after all; and I have little doubt that, could I follow it so far as to devote myself, in my profession, to the service which you find so pleasing, I should in the year we have begun be a better and a wiser—though not a richer—man. But I am younger than you, and the gaieties of London life have their attractions yet; Julia has long looked forward to her introduction into the great world,—I must not disappoint her; my friends, the men who have already *almost* made my fortune, they are religion-haters, every one! But, notwithstanding all these obstacles, I promise you to-day, that if, in another year, fortune should smile upon me, if I have then so far advanced in my up-toiling progress towards fame as to be able almost with impunity to scorn the world's opinion, we two will meet again by this fireside, and you shall help me to devote my life to God."

As Herbert spoke these words his brother's face grew pale. "O, mortal man," he said with touching earnestness, "how canst thou reckon on another year? 'To-day if ye will hear his voice,' oh, 'harden not your heart.' A year, a month—ay, even *to-morrow* may find you cold in death!"

"No, no, my parson," returned the other, with something of his former manner, as the announcement of his carriage called him back into the world, "young, strong, and ardent, I have many a year to live. Why should you come to me and croak like this?"

William made no reply, and an hour later Julia found him, in his turn, beside the glowing fire, with eyes that seemed to read a history there.

What was it that he saw? Did past experience aid him then, as with the earnest gaze of an intense abstraction, he sat there musing of what next year might bring? Was it in hope or fear he turned from the luxurious comfort of his brother's home to his own humble hearth amidst the poor?

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"Ha, ha, Mr. William Arnsby; you see that Christmas has come (with the New Year behind him), and I am living still! Do you remember how you stood beside the fire last New Year's morning and *croaked* about my prospect of early death? Well, I forgive you; since I believe it to be the fashion with religious people to live under the impression that everybody around them is going to die to-morrow; and as a proof of pardon I invite you to come up out of your miserable hiding-place and make the end of the year more cheerful than its beginning. *Perhaps* I may then be inclined to take a step or two towards that 'consummation greatly to be wished' of which we spoke so earnestly when last we met. My plans for the New year (professional and domestic) are such as must give ample occupation to my head and hands; but perhaps a *corner* in the *heart* may be left to your disposal." Such was the Christmas letter!

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