

Family Reading.

THE NEW-YEAR'S NIGHT OF AN UNFORTUNATE.

An old man stood at the window on a new-year's night, and with a look of sad despair gazed up to the fixed, ever bright heavens, and down upon the still, pure, white earth, on which no one was now so joyless and sleepless as himself. For his grave lay near him, covered over with the snow of age, not with the green of youth, and he had brought with him, out of all the riches of life nought but errors, sins, and diseases—a wasted body, a desolate soul, a breast full of poison, and an old age full of remorse.

The beautiful days of his youth glided around him to-night like spectres, and drew him back to that bright morning, when his father brought him to the turning of life's great highway, leading on the right in the path of religion to a broad, quiet land, full of light and harvest; and on the left, down through the mole tracks of vice, to a black pit, full of dropping poison of deadly serpents, and a gloomy sultry vapour. Alas! the serpents hang upon his breast, and the poison drops upon his tongue, and he knew not where he was. In unutterable sorrow, and well nigh bereft of sense, he cried out aloud: "Oh, give me back my youth? Oh, my father, bring me again to the turning point of life, that I may make another choice, and give myself, not to the devil, but to God!"

But his father and his youth were gone, long, long ago. He saw the meteor light darting up from the marshes, and going out in the church yard, and he exclaimed: "These are the days of my folly!" He saw a star glide from the heavens, glitter in its fall, and dissolve in the earth. "That am I," said his bleeding heart, and the serpent pangs of remorse pierced yet deeper into its wound. His excited fancy, pictured creeping *nighi wanderer's* on the roofs of the houses, the wind-mill lifted up high its threatening arms, and a mask that had been left behind in the house of the dead gradually took on his own features.

In the midst of this conflict of emotion, the music of the new-year's night flowed down from the neighboring town, like the distant tones of a church lay. He was more gently moved. He gazed upon the far off horizon, and around upon the wide earth, and he thought of the friends of his youth wiser and better than he—teachers of the world, the fathers of happy children, and blessed beings, and he said: "Oh, I too, had I been willing, might slumber as quietly as ye, and with as tearless eyes on this first night of the year! Oh, I too might now be happy, ye dear parents and friends, had I fulfilled your new-year's wishes and precepts!"

In feverish recollection upon the times of his youth, it seemed to him that the mask, bearing his own features, lifted itself up in the house of the dead:—at length by the working of that strange superstition, that sees phantoms and spectres in the shades of the new-year's night, it seemed to gather itself in the form of a living youth—in the attitude of the youth of the Capitol, plucking a thorn from his foot; and his own figure, in all the bloom of the spring of life, was in bitter mockery played out before his eyes. He could look no longer—he covered up his eyes—a thousand hot burning tears streamed down upon the white snow—he sighed out gently, comfortless and senseless. "Come back again, season of my youth—come back again, that I may make another choice, and not die God's enemy."

And it came—for all this had been a frightful dream. He was still a youth—it was only his wanderings—had been no dream. But he thanked God, that while yet young, he could turn back from the foul track of vice, and hasten to the sunny path that leads to the bright land of harvest. Turn back with him, young man if thou art in that erring way! This terrific dream will one day be thy judge; but if thou should then cry out, in bitter lamentation. "Come back beautiful season of youth!" it will never come back again.—*Translated from Jean Paul Richter.*

PUTTING RESOLUTIONS INTO PRACTICE.

At a Missionary Meeting held amongst the Negroes in the West Indies, these three resolutions were agreed upon:—

1. We will all give something.
2. We will all give as God has prospered us.
3. We will all give willingly.