

A New Year Thought.

THE glad and bright New Year,
Brings a book with pages white,
And spreads it open to our view,
And bids us each to write
A record true and faithful,
Of the days as they go by;
And thus he'll enter on his file,
For vast eternity.

Oh! start not back in terror,
Nor think to say him "Nay,"
For all your life, unconsciously,
You've been writing every day.
Has your record been a fair one,
Of kind word, and thought, and deed,
Of an ever active hand and heart,
To answer sorrow's need?

Has the widow and the orphan
Gone weeping from your door,
Or turned to bless you with a smile
For giving of your store?
Have you listened to the message
Of your Saviour, kind and true,
"Do ever unto others
As you'd have them do to you?"

If not, the page is darkened
With blot, and mark, and blurr,
And the angels look with pity,
On the record of the year.
And in the day of reckoning,
When heaven and earth shall fade,
Your eyes shall gaze with terror
On the history you have made.

FACING THE NEW YEAR.

MRS. AYRE woke on New Year's Day with a groan. It was a dark, drizzling morning. She had neuralgia in her right eye. Baby had screamed with colic half the night. Her husband had not given her a word of sympathy or kindness, though she knew he was awake. He had been moody and ill-tempered for days. Jane, the girl of all work, had given warning the night before. Worst of all, Robert, her eldest son, had not come home until midnight. He had fallen in with some idle fellows of late, and it was, she thought, owing to this companionship that his standing at college was so low.

She went down stairs, her soul feebly staggering under this burden of woes, and opened the windows.

"In my affliction, I called unto the Lord," she repeated, looking into the murky sky.

Suddenly, a gust of sense and courage swept through her like a fresh wind. Afflicted! Why, God was behind all these petty worries, just as the sun was back of this drenching rain. Had she no faith at all? Was she to go with a whine and lamentation to meet the New Year? God was in it, also.

She stiffened herself, body and soul. With the tears still on her cheeks, and the choking in her throat, she began to sing a gay little catch, of which she was fond, and ran to her room again to put on a fresh collar and a pretty cravat. She had twenty things to do before breakfast; but she sang on while she was about them. It was a foolish little song, yet, out of it, a singular courage and life stole into her heart.

"With prayer and thanksgiving—and thanksgiving—make known your requests unto God," she remembered. She passed through the kitchen, stopping to wish Jane a Happy New Year, with a joke. The wish and the song and the joke fell into Jane's Irish heart like a blazing rocket into a dark place.

She chuckled as she stirred the potatoes. The work at the Ayres' wasn't so heavy after all, and herself had a pleasant way with her, and there was the prisms now and then. In two months she would have enough past her to send for her sister,

and it's likely Tim Flaherty would be crossin' about that time.

Jane brought in the breakfast, with red cheeks and a broad smile. There was no more talk of warning from her.

Mr. Ayre, lying awake in bed, was tempted to wish the morning would never dawn. He was a close-mouthed, undemonstrative man, who shut his troubles down out of sight. But the weight of them just now was more than he could bear. Things were going wrong at the works. Every day he discovered mistakes and petty frauds. He was growing old—he was behind the times. Younger manufacturers were supplanting him in the market. Sharper eyes than his were needed to watch the men and the books. As far as his business was concerned, he was in a miserable blind alley, from which he saw no exit.

But the hurt which was sorest was no matter of business. Robert was low in his Greek class, and still lower in Latin. He was growing reckless, running with low companions. What he had hoped from that boy! For himself he had no ambition—but for Robert! He was to be a great lawyer, like his grandfather. But here he was, going to the dogs—at nineteen!

For days Mr. Ayre had borne his misery in grim, ill-humoured silence. But now, in his stern despair, he felt he had been silent too long. He would speak in a way which Robert would remember to his dying day. He got up, resolving, as he pulled on his boots, that the boy should either turn over a new leaf that day, or leave the house.

"If he is set on going to ruin, it shall not be under my roof! I'll not palter with him!" he thought, his jaws set and pale. "I'll disown him."

Just then a cheery song rang through the house. It was the very spirit of good sense and courage. Poor Hetty! She had been sick all night, and worried with that crying child, and there she was, facing the new year with a song! "And I behaved like a brute to her," thought Mr. Ayre.

He was very fond of his wife. As he stood shaving himself he listened to her song, and his lips trembled a little. Hetty used to sing Rob to sleep with that ditty when he was a baby. What a big fellow he was! Big in every way. There never was anything mean or sneaking about Rob—a headlong, affectionate, foolish lad.

He listened as he brandished the razor, holding counsel with himself in the glass. There could be no doubt that Hetty had twice his courage to face disaster. It was her faith, perhaps. As he laid down the razor, he nodded to himself, almost with a smile. "I reckon I was too hard on the boy. I'll give him another chance."

He heard Rob's step on the stairs, and opened the door, waiting.

Rob had wakened with an aching head. Defeat at school, the foul talk of his last night's comrades, his first drink of whisky—all tore at the poor boy's brain. He rose sullen, and ready for fight. His father and mother would both attack him, no doubt. He was tired of lecturing. He would cut loose, and earn his own bread, like a true man.

Just then his mother's voice reached his ears. It was full of tenderness and cheerful hope. It was that old song she used to be always singing. He listened with a forced scowl. But presently his face softened. Things insensibly began to look brighter. It was impossible that life had reached so terrible a crisis. There was the savoury smell of breakfast coming up, and the children laughing, and his mother singing gaily. He came down the stairs with a sudden throbbing at his heart.

Could he go back, and begin all over again? He had been an innocent boy a year ago. If father would only hear reason for a minute—

His father locked out of his door.

"Rob, my son," he called, pleasantly.

"Yes, dad," the boy answered, stopping eagerly.

"Come in; I want to have a minute's talk with you. You were out late last night. You are often out late."

Robert looked him straight in the eyes.

"Yes, father; I've been in bad company. I know it. I'm ashamed of myself."

"Your mother does not give you up," said Mr. Ayre, irritably. "She has faith in you. I don't see how she can begin the New Year with a song. Between you, and the trouble at the works, I feel as if my reason was going."

"What is wrong at the works?" said Rob, anxiously. "Sit down, father! Don't give me up. Have a little faith in me. With God's help, I'll start afresh. Don't give me up!"

Mr. Ayre looked sharply into the boy's face. It was honest—it bore the mark of no bad passion. Perhaps he had not understood Rob—perhaps he had made some mistake in managing him.

"Why do you waste your time, and my money, Robert? You are doing no good in your studies"—

"Father," said Rob boldly, "I'll tell you the truth. I hate books! I never shall be a scholar. Let me go to work. Put me in the factory to learn the business. That is what I have wanted all my life. I don't care how hard the work is"—

Mr. Ayre's countenance changed as if a cloud had vanished, and the whole face of the earth had lightened. Here was the answer to the riddle! Of course, the boy was meant for business! Cool, shrewd, honest, wide-awake. Why had he been so blind?

"We must talk it over, Robert. We must talk it over."

His voice fairly trembled with excitement. He shut the door.

Mr. Ayre was called half-a-dozen times in vain to breakfast. He came at last with Robert. The two men had bright, pleased faces.

"Well, mother!" cried Mr. Ayre, "Rob and I have a grand scheme. He is to be my right-hand man in the works. Confidential clerk until he learns the business, and then junior partner. What do you say to that? I declare I feel as if a mountain had been lifted from my back!"

Rob was standing behind his mother. He pulled back her head and kissed her. She said nothing, but the happy tears rained down her cheeks.

"I'm going to begin all over again," he whispered.

"Thank God! I knew it would all come right."

"Breakfast! Breakfast!" cried Mr. Ayre, setting to work vigorously, while the children drummed on their platters. But Rob stood by his mother, gently stroking her hand.

"Dear old mammy!" he said, "that was a good song of yours this morning."

"Yes, Hetty," said her husband, "your voice is as sweet as ever; but your heart seemed to be singing to-day, and to good purpose."—*Congregationalist*

"Now, my son, said a kind mother to her little boy, "be tidy; fold up your night-gown again; I must have it done neatly." That little boy has grown up to be a man. A friend said to him one day: "How is it that you get through so much work as you do?" "Method, method," was the reply. "I am now reaping the fruits of my mother's lesson—'Be tidy.'"

HAS it never occurred to us, when surrounded by sorrows, that they may be sent to us only for our instruction—as we darken the cages of birds when we wish to teach them to sing?