

Family Department.

NEW YEAR.

BY T. M. B.

(Written for the Church Guardian.)

Saviour new born! this new born year
We would begin and end in Thee;
Fill Thou our hearts with holy fear,
Bid our dim eyes Thy Truth to see.

Saviour new born! the old year lies
Dead 'neath its load of pride and sin!
We would in *this* press towards the prize
Thou cam'st to earth for us to win.

Lord! we would lay aside the weight
That clogged our steps with mire and clay,
And in Thy glorious strength elate,
Yet lowly, walk the upward way.

The echo of the angels' song,
Let it sound on and never cease,
Contrite and cleansed our hearts prolong:
"Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace!"

Leaving the things that are behind,
And ever looking up to Thee!
O blessed New Year which shall bind
Me to my Lord, my Lord to me!

Saviour new-born! ah, not in vain,
May earth have hailed Thy Birth-day blessed,
And, in its ceaseless round again,
Time laid another year to rest.

And not in vain the New Year's voice
Warn us while it is called to-day!
So may we in Thy love rejoice
When time itself is passed away.

"NOT MY WAY."

A TALE.

(Written for the Church Guardian.)

By T. M. B.

[Continued.]

"Good-night, old fellow. I shall see you tomorrow," and with a wistful look at the windows, through which the ruddy firelight sent a welcoming gleam, and in one of which he thought he discovered the form of Sybil herself, John drove on towards the Hall. There at least he was sure of the gladness which his coming would bring, of the loving welcome which awaited him. The Park gates stood wide open in expectation of the young master's arrival, and the old gate-keeper and his pretty daughter Jenny, smiling and courtseying, stood there to greet him as he drove through. The avenue was leafless now, and through the chilly, misty air a pale young moon shed an uncertain light. White vapours filled the hollow ground, which in summer formed beautiful ferny dells and flowery copse, and the groups of magnificent oaks and limes stood gaunt and bare.

John drove on rapidly; there was a saddening influence in the evening—wintry and dead, and yet without the bracing cold and mantling snow. The avenue seemed to have grown in length since last he drove along it, but there at last was the Hall with lighted windows—his home well beloved. As he drew up by the portico he recalled with vivid distinctness the look and voice of Sybil as they reached it together after their unexpected meeting in the park—how she had laid her hand upon his arm and bidden him wait until she had told his father of his coming. But this time he was expected, and— Yes, it was the Squire himself, who, at the sound of wheels, had come to the entrance to welcome his son. John did not know that it had cost him almost too great an effort to do so. Flinging the reins to the groom the young man sprang up the steps and clasped his father's hand.

"God bless you, my dear boy. You see your old father is on his feet still," said the Squire with a cheeriness which for the moment deceived Percy and sent a glow of hope through his heart.

"Yes, thank God, sir," he answered, deeply moved, and drawing his father's hand within his arm he turned towards the library, where he knew Nellie would be awaiting him. There was an air of Christmas preparation everywhere, which added indescribably to the sweet sense of "home-coming" which John experienced. Even as he crossed the hall where the polished oak and the stags' antlers, decorated with bunches of holly reflected the cheery lamplight, the memory of former Christmases, when on his return from Eton all things had looked as they did now, swept over him, and his mother's face seemed suddenly to emerge from the dim past and smile a tender welcome upon him; her loving spirit seemed to look at him, too, out of Nellie's eyes as she greeted him.

This Christmas-tide was to be long remembered by John Carruthers for its mingled sweetness and pain. It was the first without the presence, beloved and familiar since earliest childhood, of Hugh Barrington; it was the last, as John knew with a sad certainty, in which the noble face of the old Squire would be seen at Carruthers Hall; and it was this which made the hours spent with his father very precious to the young man. It was the time, too, when Sybil seemed nearer to him than ever before. There seemed to be a new bond between them, and even the presence of Percy, John sometimes allowed himself to hope, did not make her less mindful of himself. Was it affectionate sympathy, was it something more, that made her willing that he should now and again monopolize her? One morning during the second week of his stay at the Hall John had walked over the upland to visit Martin, the tenant by whose sick bed he had at his last visit met Stephen Ray. Winter had really showed himself at last, and under a cloudless sky the landscape lay shrouded in dazzling snow—a rare and glorious day which tempted John to prolong his walk far beyond the little farm house where his presence had been joyfully hailed, and where he had found the farmer recovered from his sickness and in good heart about the future. On the further side of the upland lay a somewhat extensive plantation of fir trees, noted for their large growth, and wondrously beautiful now in the dazzling whiteness mingled with their dark green. The plantation was intersected with broad paths, and as John was following one of these the sound of a well-known voice, sweet and clear, broke on the stillness. A moment more brought him face to face with Sybil and Percy.

"I had a presentiment that I should meet you here," exclaimed John, as he eagerly held out his hand to Sybil. "I knew that you must be out on such a morning as this."

Sybil's cheeks, flushed with the frosty air, had grown rosier at the sight of John.

"All that England wants to be the best country in the world is some more of such weather," she said, as John turned with them in the direction of Longmoor. "I should like to walk all day, but Percy limited me to the end of the plantation."

"We are going on to the Hall," said Percy, "if you are prepared to extend hospitality to two very hungry people. I have hardly seen Nell, and I want to know whether Dido has replaced Flo in her affections. And by the by," he continued, with a carelessness which was, perhaps, a little studied, "I was just going to tell Sybil when we met you that I shall have only a few days more for home. I promised Stanton to run over from Hollyhead to pay him a flying visit at his place near Dublin before we go back."

John was silent—he was looking at Sybil and reading the look of disappointment which, while Percy spoke, had grown upon her face. "O Percy!" she exclaimed as though unable to control herself, "this *first* Christmas—surely you will not leave mother so soon." "Don't be dramatic, old girl," said Percy in a tone half annoyed, half playful, "mother wishes me to go, so your objection loses its force. You will have me here for good and all before very long, I presume." After this some of the brightness went out of the day, at least for two of the party, though Sybil speedily conquered herself and spoke cheerily as before. While still at a considerable distance from the Hall they met Mr. Ray whom Percy had as yet seen little of. It seemed as though the clergyman was desirous of becoming better acquainted with

him, for joining the little party he addressed himself more particularly to Percy and soon the two were walking in advance of John and Sybil. "Did you know that Percy was to leave us so soon?" asked Sybil after a few moments silence. "I knew nothing whatever," replied John, "but since your mother wishes it," he went on, in answer to her look, rather than her words, "there is nothing to be said," Sybil sighed; "poor mother," she said, almost as though thinking aloud, whatever Percy wishes is her wish—she lives in him." "And so does Sybil," said John, half playfully. "Yes," she said, looking up at him with a smile; "and so does Sybil. Can you wonder, John? Everyone likes him, I think, and who can know him as we do?" John Carruthers could surely find no fault with this affection, so beautiful in its perfect tenderness and trust, and warmly as he himself felt for its object, and yet, Sybil's words filled him with a vague depression. This girl would never accept the offering of his life and heart, unless she could render an equal love in return—such a love must be beyond any other. "For this cause must one leave father and mother," and brother also—but how did her affection for himself compare with that for Percy? He was not conscious of the look of dejection which had crept over his face and of the silence which he had left unbroken. Looking up at last he met Sybil's eyes; those clear, questioning eyes, so full of truth and kindness, fixed on him more earnestly than she was herself aware, and the spell was broken. "Sybil, you look as though you could read my thoughts," he said. "I was wishing that I could," she said frankly, "or rather wishing that I could give you brighter ones. You looked so sad, John, but I know, I know how much there is to sadden you." "Yes," he said, "the parting which I fear will come before another Christmas throws a shadow over this which I can never quite shake off, and there was another thought which saddened me just now Sybil." He might have said more had not Mr. Ray and Percy presently slackened their steps and thus ended their *te te*.

[To be continued.]

A SHEPHERD BOY'S IDEA OF PRAYER.

A little lad was keeping his sheep one Sunday morning. The bells were ringing for service at the church, and the people were going over the fields, when the little fellow began to think that he too would like to pray to God. But what could he say, for he had never learnt any prayer. However, he knelt down, and commenced the alphabet. A B C D and so on to Z. A gentleman happening to pass on the other side of the hedge, heard the lad's voice, and looking through the bushes saw the little fellow kneeling with folded hands and closed eyes, saying the A B C.

"What are you doing my little man?" said the gentleman kindly.

The little lad looked up. "Please sir, I was praying."

"But what are you saying your letters for?"

"Why I don't know any prayer, only I felt in my heart that I wanted God to take care of me, and help me take care of the sheep; so I thought if I said all I knew, He would put it together and spell all what I wanted."

"Bless your heart my little man, He will, He will; when the heart speaks right, the lips can't say wrong."

The prayer that goes to heaven, must come from the heart.

A PRAYER TO BE USED DURING THE OFFERTORY.

BLESSED be Thou, O God of Israel, our Father, for ever and ever.

All that is in heaven or earth is Thine.

All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee.

Graciously accept, O Lord, these our offerings from Thine unworthy servants; for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."