



The Family Circle.

THE GLAD NEW YEAR.

With the whirling and drifting of snows,
Comes breathless, the wild New Year,
While bitter the North wind blows
O'er the fields that lie stark and drear.

Yet Hope is alight in her eyes
As she looks from the heart of the storm,
"Earth sleeps in her shroud," she cries,
"But the life in her breast is warm."

"Death is but a dream of the night,
And the hymn of joy is begun,
For slowly seeking the light
The great globe turns to the sun.

"Behold, I will bring delight
In place of the darkness and cold
Safe under the meadows so white
Is hiding the buttercup's gold.

"The blush of the sweet-briar rose,
Where is it treasured to-day?
I will call it from under the snows
To bloom on its delicate spray.

"I will fling all the flowers abroad,
And loose in the echoing sky
The beautiful birds of God,
To carol their rapture on high.

"And the summer's splendor shall reign
In place of the winter's dearth,
Her color and music again
Shall gladden the patient earth.

"Look but with eyes that are pure
On the gifts in my hand that lie,
And your portion of bliss is sure
In the beauty no wealth can buy."

Hark to the New Year's voice
Through the murk of the winter drear;
O children of men, rejoice
At the tidings of hope and cheer!

CELIA FRANKER.

ONE SUNDAY EVENING.

BY MRS. JENNIE M. D. CONKLIN.

It was a stormy Sunday evening in the country; there had been no church-going all day; early in the evening a Sunday-weariness fell upon everybody.

The house was full, as to-morrow would be Christmas, and cousins had gathered from near and far. Twenty grown people were seated at the supper table; the seven children had a table to themselves.

"I wish there was such a thing as a Sunday game," exclaimed Mildred.

"That's wicked," rebuked her little sister, shocked.

"No, it is not," replied Mildred, reasonably. "I mean something to rest me and help me and send me to bed glad."

"As if there were not such a thing for Sunday," was somebody's indignant rejoinder.

"That is what Sunday is for; to send us to bed glad."

"But I do not wish to be simply receptive; I wish to be communicative," Mildred explained.

"That is the command," said the young minister, "and it certainly holds good for Sunday evening. And may I suggest how?"

"Oh, do! do!" eagerly chorused relieved voices.

"I thought it was wicked to go to bed so early," observed Barbara, "but I couldn't find anything new to read."

"Then everybody who wishes to 'communicate,' get paper and pencil and seat himself and herself at the dining-room table. People who have nothing to give, and all things to get, may make a second row and listen."

It was fifteen minutes before the communicators and the listeners were seated in the dining-room. The young minister smiled when he found that the oldest people in the house had placed themselves in the audience; in the church-in-the-house, was it the young who were aggressive; eager for work, anxious to do good, and to communicate?

"The old folk must be stirred up," he said to himself; and perhaps this plan of his would be one way to do it.

"Now what shall we do, Cousin David?" questioned Harriet. "My mind is as blank as my half sheet of paper."

"I wish each of you to do this," he said, standing, with pencil uplifted in his right hand. "Write on your half sheet of paper, as naturally and easily as you can, any bit of the experience of your life, anything remembered from your reading, anything you happen to think of at the moment, anything that has helped you, anything to help your neighbor, any suggestion, any question."

"That covers acres," remarked the farmer in the audience. "But anybody can drop a seed."

The half-hour was filled with swift-moving and slow-moving pencils, ejaculations, the sound of paper torn into bits, then somebody in hope, or in despair, beginning again. The children grew tired of waiting for the end of things, and crowded around grandmother in the parlor for Bible studies; then grandmother was summoned to listen. Young pastor David stood at the end of the long table, with the sheets and half sheets of note paper arranged in his hand, and glanced around at the expectant faces.

"I wish I had such faces every Sunday," he remarked; "and I could have, if everybody would do something. There are no names signed, so none of you need be too afraid of having your heart too wide open."

He read distinctly, and interest deepened with each paper:

"God says: 'I know the things that come into your mind.' That makes me afraid, for I let things come into my mind that I would not tell anybody; plans, and air-castles, and thoughts—hateful thoughts—about people. And I am glad, too; for he knows how repentant I am, better than I can tell him."

Without comment he opened another folded sheet:

"Christ left two promises to the world; the coming of the Holy Ghost, and his own coming again. I never thought before to-night that either of the two promises makes much difference to me: I should not have thought of them now, but that I tried to remember something—my Sunday-school teacher said, and I thought of that. I am ashamed that such wonderful promises make so little difference in my life. I don't mean to excuse myself, but I would like to ask a hundred people and see how many have thought of one or both of them to-day."

"H'm!" ejaculated grandfather, "I haven't."

David read:

"I do not think I shall be so selfishly glad in heaven (glad that I am there) that I shall forget people and things I have cared about on earth; and if I do remember and speak to the Lord about them, will that be praying? Perhaps I may remember some prayer (for somebody) he had not answered the day I died. There may be another name for it in the heavenly speech."

For some reason old Aunt Phebe's eyes filled. David read on:

"One night at bed-time I was too tired to read my usual chapter in the Bible, and I told father. He said that often he would rather think of Christ than of any word he had spoken, just as one would love to be with one's dearest friend when one was too tired to talk, or listen, and Christ understood, as the friend did."

"That's true," responded invalid cousin Jane.

"The Lord expected Paul to work, and work hard, with his thorn in the flesh, and Paul did not caution Timothy about doing too much, because of his often infirmities. Earnest, hopeful work helps to heal mind and body."

"God meant to send Isaac and Jacob into the world, and yet they had to be prayed for. And so had Samson, and Samuel and John the Baptist. Human prayers are one of the forces God works with. Prayer was the forerunner."

"A small trial reveals whether one has faith or not as certainly as a straw shows which way the wind blows."

David prayed: "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense, and John in the isle of Patmos, in his vision of heaven, saw the prayers of all saints offered with incense."

"Somebody said the other day that the world was full of sin, and old Mrs. Rankin said there was more grace than sin in the world, and it provoked quite a discussion, but she ended it with quoting: 'Sin abounds, but grace much more abounds.'"

"H'm!" ejaculated grandfather again.

"In a letter a dear saint wrote, and I copied it: 'I rejoice in doing nothing if nothing be thy will for me, but until thou dost show me that nothing is thy will for me, I may hope that something is, and seek that something.' That helped me, because I don't want to keep still and do nothing, until I must."

"The Lord's way is not only the best way, but it is so best that there is no other way worth doing."

"Something runs in my head and keeps out everything else:

Don't be sorrowful, darling,
Don't be sorry, I pray,
For taking the year together, my dear,
There isn't more night than day."

"It is said of Jesus: 'When Jesus heard that; but he knew it before he heard; and to hear, yet some one had to tell him. I think he likes to be told things.'"

"I used to be afraid of Satan until I read that the devils could not even enter into the swine until they asked Jesus and got his permission—I read about it to-day."

"It came to me with a great shock when I learned that Christ healed men's bodies according to their faith, and did not at the same time heal their souls. One man wist not who it was that healed him. That seems more sad than not being healed—only God keeps on doing where he has begun."

"The only thing we know about blind Bartimeus after he received his sight is that he followed Jesus."

And this was the last thought in Mildred's mind when she "went to bed glad."
—Advance.

NEW YEARS IN RUSSIA.

The first day of the new year in Russia might be called the children's time, for it is ushered in by all sorts of pranks played by the small boy. On New Year's morning the sun is scarcely visible above the eastern horizon ere the young boys of the village sally forth on mischief bent. It is a great day for them, and they make the most of the occasion. It is customary for the youths to form into groups, and, with their pockets well filled with dried peas and wheat, proceed from house to house. The doors of the houses are never bolted, and the boys are thus enabled to enter without disturbing the inmates.

The peas and wheat are very significant emblems. The former are used to arouse from their slumbers those persons who in any way have incurred the enmity of the boys. They are sometimes thrown with such force and in such numbers as to cause the operation to be a very painful one. This, of course, affords the throwers the greatest amusement. The sleeper, thus suddenly awakened, feels like chastising his tormentors, but when he remembers that it is New Year's morn, and that it is the youngsters' day, he joins in the laugh against himself, and turns over for another nap. The wheat is more gentle in its effects, and is tried on friends only. Thus, at the very beginning of the year, the children show their likes and dislikes, and each individual is given to understand whether he is regarded in the light of friend or foe. This custom is exclusively the privilege of the young people.

Early in the day the handsomest horse of which the village boasts is brought out, and its trappings are gayly decorated with evergreens and berries. Thus adorned, it is led to the house of the nobleman, followed by the pea and wheat shooters of the early morning. On the door being opened, the horse is led into the parlor, where the family assemble to admire his glossy coat and fondle him. The noble animal receives the caresses of the family with the greatest solemnity, while he gazes about him with a proud air, as if he understood that the occasion was a memorable one. This is the greeting of the peasants, old and young, to their lord and master. The origin of this custom is shrouded in mystery, but it is supposed to date from Biblical times. The persons who enter the house with the horse are rewarded with small silver coins, which are usually bestowed by the children of the household.

Next comes a procession of real animals, such as the ox, cow, goat, and hog, led by children. These quadrupeds, like the horse, are decorated with evergreens and berries. They do not enter, but pass slowly in front of the house, that the master

and his family may view the strange procession from the windows. Then old women appear, bringing the different barn-yard fowls, which are also decked with evergreens and berries. These are intended as presents for the master. The noise made by the feathered tribe as they are carried into the house is almost deafening. It occasionally happens that some of the birds make their escape, and then ensues a wild chase, in which all the children of the village join. The Russian small boy is no different in this respect from the American youth, for he frequently provokes this sport by suddenly snatching a bird from under the arm of one of the old women and setting it free for the purpose of having the village urchins chase it. This is capital fun, and the children enjoy it very much.

The peasants are very superstitious, and believe that the miracle of the feast of Cana of Galilee can be repeated, if the people only have faith, as the old year ushers in the new. At precisely the midnight hour, or as nearly as the clocks of the village reckon that time, men, women, and children stand round a large jar filled with water which they anxiously watch to see if it will turn into wine. Year after year the same performance is enacted, and always with the same result.

A superstition indulged in by young girls soon after the advent of the new year is to place a looking-glass between two lighted candles, and sit looking into it until the face of the future husband of each is revealed to her. A trick of the imagination does the rest, and the young girl is happy.

The second day of the new year is devoted to paying visits, a pleasure which the children share with their parents. The visiting over, parents and children separate—the older people to enjoy themselves in their own way, and the young people to follow their example—both parties usually indulging in sleigh-riding.

The young folks always try to get beyond the reach of the older people. During the attempt many ludicrous scenes occur. For instance, the village youths and maidens, in their wild efforts to get beyond the reach of parental control, frequently have their sleighs upset, when a general scramble ensues, and the vehicles are righted amid much merriment. This amusement concludes the holiday season, and the next day the villagers, young and old, return to their ordinary pursuits.—*Countess Naraihow.*

BIBLE STUDY.

Be faithful in Bible research. A great many good books are now coming out. We cannot read half of them. At every revolution of the printing press they are coming. They cover our parlor tables, and are in our sitting-rooms and libraries. Glorious books they are. We thank God every day for the work of the Christian printing press. But I have thought that perhaps the followers of Christ sometimes allow this religious literature to take their attention from God's Word, and that there may not be as much Bible reading as there ought to be.

How is that with your own experience? Just calculate in your minds how much religious literature you have read during the year, and then how large a portion of the Word of God you have read, and then contrast the two and answer within your own soul whether you are giving more attention to the books that were written by the hand of man or that written by the hand of God. Now, you go to the drug store and you get the mineral waters; but you have noticed that the waters are not so fresh or sparkling or healthful as when you get these very waters at Saratoga and Sharon—getting them right where they bubble from the rock. And I have noticed the same thing in regard to the truth of the Gospel; while there is a good deal of refreshment and health of the Gospel of God as it comes through good books, I find it is better when I come to the eternal rock of God's Word and drink from that fountain that bubbles up fresh and pure to the life and refreshing of the soul.—*Dr. Talmage.*

If You WANT to help the Lord in your own family don't scold much.