

THE TWO NEW YEAR'S GIFTS.

PART I.

It was the second morning of the new year, and Annie Deene sat by the front window of the apartments which she and her mother occupied in a quiet side street turning out of one of the great thoroughfares of busy London. Drawing materials and a group of half-finished flowers, beautifully painted, were before her, but she had laid down her brush and appeared to be thinking. After sitting with her head on her hand for a minute or two, she took up a pencil and began to write something on the paper which she used for trying her tints. "Yes, that will do," said she, half aloud, as she afterwards read it over: "One pound for charity; I shall give five shillings to the missionary box, and lay out the remainder in a blanket and some coals and flannel for widow Harris and old Mrs. Gray; then a pound for a new winter dress for mamma, and three pounds for myself. How delightful to buy books! yes, I shall lay it all out in books. I will get several which I have wanted a long time; let me see—" but here she was suddenly interrupted by a smart rap at the door; and a minute after a bright, pretty-looking girl, in a fashionable walking dress, entered the room. It was her cousin, Emma Turner.

"A happy new year to you, my sweet cousin," said she, going up to Annie, and saluting her; "allow me to congratulate you."

"Upon what?" said Annie, returning her salutation, and at the same time leading her to an easy chair by the fire.

"Ah, you think I am not in the secret; but look here," she replied, flourishing a five-pound note in the air as she spoke; "I am as rich myself. But, seriously, Annie, what could have induced uncle William to take such a fit of generosity? I assure you I was never so astonished in my whole life."

"I was a little surprised too," replied Annie; "but, really, it was very kind of him, was it not? To make a new year's gift of it too, so much more pleasant than having it at any other time."

"Oh, very kind, indeed," replied Emma. "I have always had an affection for new years' gifts ever since I can remember. And now for the next question; what do you mean to buy, Annie?"

“Rather an impertinent question, in my opinion,” returned Annie, good-humouredly. “Suppose, however, I answer it, as some people do, by asking another: what do you mean to buy, Emma?”

“I know you will be shocked,” replied Emma, “but I cannot help it, so I had better tell you at once. I am going to buy a charming new dress for Mrs. Holmby’s ball. The money has come in most apropos for the occasion, for mamma had declared that she would not give me a dress, and I could not possibly have gone in my old white muslin.”

“But, surely, Emma,” said Annie, “you will not spend the whole five pounds on a dress just for one evening.”

“Every penny of it, my love, on the dress and et ceteras. The fact is, Annie, I have set my heart upon this ball; and for once in my life I mean to make the most of myself, and look very nice. Several people are to be there whom I particularly wish to see, especially Lady G—; every one says that she is a most charming woman.”

“I have heard the same,” replied Annie, “but I have also heard that she never goes to balls; and, besides, you know, she lost her mother only about a month ago.”

“Well, my dear, I cannot help that,” said Emma; “all I know is that I shall be very glad to avail myself of this same opportunity of getting an introduction to her ladyship. And now, Annie, having satisfied your curiosity as to what I mean to buy with my new year’s gift, be so good as to tell me in return what you mean to do with yours.”

“I have had so short a time to consider of it,” replied Annie, “that I have not yet exactly made up my mind what to do with it; probably I shall buy several things; five pounds, you know, is a larger sum to me than it is to you, Emma.”

“Well, as to that I don’t know,” replied Emma; “for I am sure I always want money badly enough, though papa does think my allowance so handsome. But if I were you, Annie,” she continued, dropping her playful tone and speaking very earnestly, “I would not buy several things. I would have something handsome—a new shawl, for instance, such as that which papa gave me last winter; it cost just five guineas, and I was thinking the other day what a time you had had that cloak of yours.”

"It will do very well for this year," replied Annie. "Besides I do not intend buying myself any articles of dress; I would much rather have a few nice books."

"Nonsense," said Emma; "really, Annie, you are quite book mad; surely you will never be so ridiculous as to spend the whole five pounds on books?"

"No, not the whole of it. But if I did, Emma, do you think it would be worse than spending it on a ball-dress?"

In order to avoid answering this question, Emma turned to Annie's drawing-table and began to talk about the group which she was painting; the ball-dress, however, was still uppermost in her mind; at length putting away the drawing, she said, "Well, Annie, what do you think I had better have, lace or silk? and what flowers shall I wear in my hair, and so on?"

"My dear Emma," replied Annie, "what is the use of asking me? You know I never go to parties, and, consequently, can have no taste in such things; you had much better consult your dressmaker."

"I shall do no such thing," replied Emma, "for you know, Annie, that though I do scold you for being dowdy sometimes, I have a very high opinion of your taste: people who draw always have good taste."

Annie smiled at this flattery. She could not, however, be of any service in the matter. Any hint in favour of plain and simple attire was instantly set aside; and notwithstanding Emma's professed admiration of her cousin's taste, she did not, in any single respect, take her advice; having, in fact, made up her mind beforehand to a much more showy costume than Annie could by any means be brought to admire.

"Emma," said she, when the subject, much to her relief, was at length exhausted, and the young devotee of fashion arose to depart, "have you remembered the coal ticket which I asked you about for poor Mrs. Brown?"

"Oh dear," she replied, "I forgot all about it; and, besides, Annie," she added, slightly colouring, "I think I never paid my subscription to the coal society last year, and so, of course, I am not entitled to any tickets. I am very sorry, but I dare say the poor woman will get one given to her by some one else."

Annie looked disappointed; but she did not speak her thoughts, and Emma forthwith took her leave.

The next morning Annie wended her way in and out

several narrow streets; and at last came to a tall house, the door of which stood open. She went in, and passing up stairs knocked at one of the doors on the second landing place. It was opened by a little girl.

"Well, Martha," said she, "how is your mother to-day?"

"Better, ma'am, thank you," replied the child; "she thinks she shall be able to get up this afternoon."

The room was scantily furnished, but was neat and clean; there was a bright little fire in the grate, and on the bed, which stood near it, lay a sick woman; she was covered with a warm new blanket.

"Oh, miss," said she, as Annie approached her, "how can we thank you for your goodness? I haven't been so warm before all this winter."

"I am so glad," said Annie. "I thought you would find the blanket comfortable; but you must not thank me, for if it had not been for the kindness of a friend I could not have sent it to you. Do you think you are feeling a little better?"

"Yes, miss, thank God, I feel a good bit stronger to-day. I think it is being warm that has done me as much good as anything. Oh, miss, I can't tell you what a treasure the coals were you were so good as to send last night; we hadn't had a spark of fire all day. I was almost perished; and poor Patty, there, was crying with the cold ready to break her heart."

A still small voice whispered in Annie's heart, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." She however said nothing, but, taking out her little pocket Testament, sat down, as was her wont, to read from it to the sick woman. When she had finished, and made some few simple remarks, the little girl, who had been an attentive listener, said to her mother, "Mother, wouldn't Ellen like to hear Miss Deene read?"

"Who is Ellen? some friend of yours, Martha?" inquired Annie.

"She is a poor young woman, miss," replied Mrs. Harris, "who has lately taken the room over this. She used to keep a stall in one of the bazaars at the west end, but she had a bad illness three or four months ago, and now she takes in plain needlework."

"Poor girl!" said Annie; "I will go up and see her; for though I have not anything to give her, she may

perhaps be glad of a book to read. Martha, will you ask her if I shall come up now?"

Martha gladly flew off on her errand, and in less than ten minutes, Annie, seated by the side of the wan, weary-looking young sempstress, was listening with patient ear and ready sympathy to her sad, but, alas! common tale of poverty and suffering. She was one who had seen better days; and Annie could not help feeling as much struck by the superior tone of her manners and conversation, as she was by the pious resignation and patience with which she seemed to bear the trials and sufferings which God had seen fit to lay upon her.

"You are still looking very thin and weak," said she; "do you not find the exertion of working so closely too much for you?"

"Sometimes I do, miss," she replied, "and then I lie down and rest for half-an-hour; but I ought to be very thankful that I can get work to do, for if I could not I must either starve or go to the workhouse. These shirts that I am making now," she added, "are very fine; and stitching the collars and wristbands tries my eyes sadly; they have been so very weak ever since my illness, that on some days I cannot see to stitch at all."

After half-an-hour's further conversation, Annie again found herself in the busy street. "How I wish that I were rich!" thought she, as she passed along; "If I had at my disposal but half the money that Emma has, how much good I would do!" Suddenly, as much from habit as anything, she stood still before a bookseller's shop and began to read over the names of the volumes in the window. She did not however remain long; in less than five minutes she had retraced her steps and again entered the small chamber of the young needlewoman.

"It has just struck me," said she, hurriedly, "that I know of a way in which I could help you a little. I am not rich, or I would do something better for you, but you said that it hurts your eyes to stitch; if you will trust me with the collars and wristbands you spoke of, I will do them for you and bring them back the next time I come."

The poor girl had suffered alone so long and so much, that this proof of genuine kindness and sympathy from one to whom she was a perfect stranger quite overcame her, and she burst into tears. "You are too good!" she murmured.

“ Oh, no,” said Annie, “ do not think anything of it ; my eyes are strong, and I have plenty of time at home : give them to me.”

“ God will reward you,” said the needlewoman, as she placed them in her hand ; “ I never can.”

In the course of a few days Annie's self-imposed task was completed, and she was again seated in Ellen Martin's little room. “ I suppose,” said she, “ that your stall in the bazaar was much more profitable to you than plain work.”

“ Oh, yes, much more,” replied Ellen ; “ I was beginning to get quite a comfortable living when my illness came. At one time I hoped to have been able to get back again ; but I fear I must quite give up the thought of it now.”

“ You have of course parted with all your stock,” remarked Annie.

“ No, miss, only with a part of it. A person, whom I knew, consented, when I was in my greatest need, to lend me three pounds upon the remainder ; if I could repay the money I might of course have the things and take my stall again, but I fear I shall never be able to do so ; it is as much as I can do to live now, and fancy articles do not bear keeping, they get old fashioned and lose their beauty.”

Annie did not reply for a minute or two ; at length, she said, “ If any one were to lend you the money, do you think you should ever be able to repay it ?”

“ Oh, yes, I am sure I should in time, but I know no one of whom I could ask such a favour ; people do not like to lend money to those who are as poor as I am.”

Annie had left home that morning with the intention of going to the booksellers in order to purchase the volumes with which she intended to treat herself out of her uncle's new year's gift. Instead however of carrying this intention into effect, she passed the shop without even looking in, and went straight home again. Her visit to Ellen Martin had brought to her mind a new plan of using her money. But she did not wish to do anything hastily, and so determined to consult her mother before putting it into execution.

S. M. F.

To be continued.

words contain. One glimpse of the Redeemer's cross revealed to him what nothing else could, the extent of his obligations to the God who had made him, and who had given him power to get wealth. Ere long, with an overflowing heart, he thanked William Morris for the "plain speaking" which had arrested him in his course of covetousness; thenceforward his gains, whether of a penny or a pound, paid no stinted tribute into the treasury of the Lord, before he presumed to call them his own; and while he still gave all due attention to his business, he found that it prospered nothing the less, because, following his friend's example, he made time to "examine the accounts every day," in what he now felt to be his chief concern—that which lay between God and his undying soul. M. B. T.

THE TWO NEW YEAR'S GIFTS.

PART II.

IT was the morning after Mrs. Holmby's party. Ellen Martin no longer sat—

"With fingers weary and worn,
Plying her needle and thread."

She was at the bazaar, and with joy in her face, and hope in her heart, was busily re-arranging her little stock of wares in her long deserted stall. At the same moment Annie Deene was passing through the street, in which the Turners resided; she had been to the bazaar, and her countenance too looked happy and joyful. Whether her gladness was in any way connected with that of Ellen Martin, we leave to the discernment of the reader to decide. "I may as well call and see how Emma is after the party," said she to herself, as she glanced up to the windows of her cousin's room, the blinds of which were not yet drawn up, and, suiting the action to the word, she at once went up the steps and knocked at the door. She found Emma still in her bed-room, reclining in an easy chair by the fire; she looked flushed, and to use an expressive term "put out."

"Well," said Annie after the first salutation was over, "how did you enjoy yourself last night, Emma?"

"Not at all; not one of the people whom I wished to meet was there, and altogether it was the most dull, stupid party I ever was at in my life."

"Not very complimentary to your hostess I must say,"

said Annie smiling; "had you not even the much wished for introduction to Lady G—?"

"Lady G—," repeated Emma; "well, I must tell you about her, though I know you will say that Mrs. Holmby was rightly served. She, it seems, knowing her ladyship's dislike to large parties, never told her that it was to be a regular ball, but merely invited her to spend a quiet evening; and consequently she came, of course, in deep mourning for her mother, and a high dress. I was near the door when she was announced. I never shall forget her look as she glanced round the room, or the tone with which, when Mrs. Holmby came forward full of smiles to meet her, she said, 'Mrs. Holmby, you have (unintentionally perhaps) misled me; I was invited to spend a quiet evening; you must excuse me if I say that I cannot remain; neither my dress nor my feelings at all accord with this scene.'"

"And did she go?" said Annie.

"Instantly; and Mrs. Holmby was, of course, put out for the rest of the evening, and all the people were disagreeable."

"Well," said Annie, "I must say that I do think it was nothing more than Mrs. Holmby deserved. But your dress, Emma, I suppose that looked very nice."

"My poor dress, that was another source of mortification; I felt I was a regular butterfly, for as it happened all the girls wore remarkably plain dresses, most of them white. I cannot tell you how annoyed I felt to think that I had gone to such an expense; I wished to my heart a dozen times that uncle William had never given me the five pounds, for if he had not I should most likely have remained at home."

But this wish, as far as she herself was concerned, found no echo in Annie's heart; how was it possible for it to do so, when she remembered the happiness which her own new year's gift had been the means of imparting not only to herself but to others also, when the bright hopeful looks of the once drooping Ellen came before her, and the grateful accents of the widow and the orphan were still sounding in her ears?

"It certainly seems to have been an unfortunate affair altogether," said she, in reply to Emma's last remarks, "and shows the truth of the old saying, that 'all is not gold that glitters.' You are not looking well either, Emma; you have not taken cold I hope."

“ I rather think that I have,” she replied, “ for I feel dreadfully shivery ; something was the matter with the window of the carriage in which we came home ; I could not close it, and there was consequently a great draught ; but I shall say nothing about it, for the Gardiners have invited me to go with them to the theatre to-night, which I shall certainly do, in order if possible to get into a good temper again.”

Annie soon after took her leave. She sighed as she thought of the false and hollow foundation on which her cousin endeavoured to rear a superstructure mis-called happiness. Gladly would she have striven to show her a more excellent way, but she knew from past experience that her words would only be met either with covert sarcasm or open jest, so she held her peace ; and inwardly thanking God that she had herself been taught to think differently, and praying that her cousin's mind might be awakened to right views, she again returned to her quiet but happy home.

In the course of a day or two she heard that Emma had a severe cold, but supposing that it was “ only a cold,” she did not go to inquire after her. Two days after she received the following hurried note from her aunt :—

“ DEAR ANNIE,

“ Pray come to us ; Emma is very ill ; the doctor has just alarmed us dreadfully.

“ Yours affectionately,
“ C. S.”

The facts of the case were these : Emma had taken cold on returning from the party ; with care it would probably have gone off, but the visit to the theatre increased it ; an attack of inflammation followed, and the once gay, sparkling girl now lay stretched upon what proved to be the bed of death. It was not long before Annie was in the sick-room, bending over the poor sufferer with looks of the deepest pity and concern.

“ Annie,” she exclaimed, as soon as she saw her, “ I am dying ; tell me, oh do tell me, what I am to do ;” and she clasped Annie's hand with an energy which seemed almost like that of despair.

“ Dear Emma,” she replied, “ calm yourself ; I hope you are not so ill as you think.”

“ Annie, I am,” she replied ; “ I know I shall die, I feel

it, I feel it here;" and she laid her hand upon her chest. "Oh, what shall I do?"

The Bible was no strange book to Annie, and with its blessed words of hope and encouragement she endeavoured to instruct and comfort the dying girl, but her words seemed to impart no consolation.

"Oh, Annie," said she, "if I had only listened to you before, I should not have been the miserable creature I now am. Oh, to think of the hours, the days, the years I have wasted! What shall I do? what shall I do?"

"You must go to the Lord Jesus, dear Emma," replied Annie, "he is your only refuge; a broken and a contrite heart he will not despise; and he says, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;*' he bids you cast your burden upon him, and he will bear it for you."

"Annie," said Emma, solemnly, "if this were the first time I had heard these things, I think I might venture to hope, but it is not; they have been sounding in my ears for years, but I have refused to listen; I have sought nothing but my own pleasure and amusement, what right then can I have to expect that God will accept these few last miserable hours, instead of the life-time which ought to have been devoted to his service?"

The Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy," replied Annie, in a gentle voice; "'He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.'"†

"Ah yes," said Emma, "how often have I heard those words! but, Annie, the Bible says, I cannot forget it, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.'"‡

"Yes, dear Emma, but it says also, 'The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.'§ We are to work, not that we may be saved thereby, but to show that we love him."

The next day Emma died. Like as the grass withereth, like as the flower fadeth, so was she cut down. She appeared penitent during the short time given her for repentance. Earnestly did Annie endeavour to persuade her to trust only to that Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. She tried to do so; but it was with fear and trembling, not with peace and holy confidence, that Emma seemed to cling to his cross, and dark and dismal were the

* Matthew xi. 28.

† Philippians ii. 12.

‡ Psalm ciii. 10.

§ 1 John i. 7.

misgivings and mistrust which clouded her mind to her very last moment.

* * * *

When the next new year came it found Annie in sorrow such as she had never known before. She was mourning over the newly closed grave of her mother, and to her grief was added the bitter pang of knowing that she must now, if she could not make up her mind to seek a home amongst strangers, at least depend almost entirely upon her own exertions for support; for her father having been a naval officer, the pension which Mrs. Deene had enjoyed as his widow had expired with her. Annie had two brothers, both younger than herself, and for their sakes she determined, if possible, to avoid giving up her home and going out as resident governess. But what could she do? There seemed but one thing open to her, she must try to obtain morning or daily pupils. She did try, but without any success, for no one seemed in want of a morning governess just then, and no pupils were to be heard of.

One day returning from an unsuccessful expedition of inquiry, she sat down by the fire, and in a desponding mood took up her portfolio, and began to turn over the drawings which it contained. "How I wish I could make something of my drawings!" said she half aloud; "but it is of no use to think of it, no one wants to buy drawings, and there are so many who teach."

She had scarcely uttered the words when a visitor made her appearance. It was Ellen Martin. She had a small parcel in her hand.

"You look so smiling, Ellen," said Annie, as she shook hands with her, "that I begin to hope that you have brought me good news; have you heard of a situation?"

"No, dear Miss Deene," she replied, "but if you will try my plan, I believe I have thought of something which will answer your purpose even better."

Annie eagerly inquired what it was.

"Last night," she replied, "as I lay awake thinking of you, I remembered all at once seeing you, one day when I called, painting a pair of fire-screens; you said they were for a friend, do you recollect it?"

"Oh yes, quite well; they had embossed borders."

"Well," continued Ellen, "there is nothing of that kind I am certain sold in our bazaar, and it struck me that if you would like to paint a pair or two, as well as some

cards for blotting cases and other things, I could make them up prettily and dispose of them for you. I am quite sure they would sell, your painting is so different to what is usually seen on such articles."

"I shall be delighted to do so," said Annie, her countenance brightening as she spoke; "how kind of you, Ellen, to think of me so!"

"Don't say that, Miss Deene," replied Ellen; "do I not owe everything I have to you? If you had not so generously lent me the money you did twelve months ago I might have been in my grave: I believe I should long before this. I have brought a pair of screens," she added, opening the paper in her hand, "and some cards, so if you please you can begin them at once."

With a light heart Annie set to work. She had great natural talent for painting, and in a week a pair of screens and several cards for blotting cases were completed, and prettily made up by the tasteful hand of Ellen Martin. They attracted great admiration, and in the course of a week she had the delight and satisfaction of placing in Annie's hand nearly double the sum which she had expected to receive for them.

The next day a lady with two little girls appeared at the stall; she was one of Ellen's best customers.

"I have seen a very pretty blotting case which a friend of mine purchased of you a few days ago," said she; "have you another of the same description?"

"I am sorry to say that I have not at present, my lady," replied Ellen, "but I expect to have some more in a week or two."

"But will they be painted by the same person?" inquired the lady; "the one which I saw was much more beautifully painted than articles of that description usually are."

"They will be painted by the same person, my lady," replied Ellen.

"Very well," said the lady, "then you will put one by for me: good morning;" and so saying she walked away to another stall. In a few minutes, however, she returned, saying, "I think that I should prefer choosing my own flowers for the blotting case; I should like roses and violets on one side, and a group of azaleas on the other; I suppose there would be no objection."

"Certainly not, my lady," replied Ellen; "I can take any

orders which you may please to leave, or the young lady would call upon you herself."

"I think that would be the better plan; or it might be better still for me to call upon her; her time is doubtless valuable to her: could you give me her address?"

Ellen immediately took out a card, wrote Annie's address, and handed it to her.

"Miss Deene?" said the lady glancing at it; "it is not a very common way of spelling the name. I will call upon her to-morrow."

The next morning after Annie had been quietly settled to her painting for an hour or two, a carriage drove up to the door, and she saw a lady alight from it. What was her surprise when the door of her own little sitting-room was thrown open, and the servant announced "Lady G—." If Lady G— had been pleased with her friend's blotting case, she was still more so with the ladylike appearance and gentle but diffident manners of the young artist. With the quick eye of one accustomed to read human life in all its varied phases of trial and sorrow, she at once surmised how matters stood with Annie. In a few sentences she explained her errand, and by the kindness and suavity of her manner soon set Annie at ease. She looked over all her paintings, and complimented her highly on the taste and skill displayed in their execution. At length, after a prolonged stay, she arose to depart. As she did so Annie could not help feeling that her eye fell upon her in that sort of way, which makes one conscious that the observer is noting something, it may be either to your advantage or otherwise in your appearance. She blushed deeply.

"Pardon me," said Lady G—, instantly withdrawing her eye, "but may I ask if you are in any way related to the family of the Deenes who used to live at — vicarage; there is something in your face which reminds me so forcibly of old Mr. Deene, that your name being also spelt in the same way I cannot resist asking."

Annie, with some surprise at so unexpected a question, replied that her father was son to the old clergyman mentioned by Lady G—, adding that she had always been thought very like her grandfather, who had now been dead many years.

"How delighted I am!" exclaimed Lady G—, seizing Annie's hand and shaking it warmly; "you are, then, the

grand-daughter of one of the best and dearest friends I ever had in the world.”

A long explanation followed, in the course of which it appeared that Lady G—, not having always occupied so high a position as that which she now filled, had many years ago been very much indebted to the good old clergyman for acts of great kindness and friendship. She had afterwards married, left England, and resided abroad for several years. On her return home her benefactor was dead, and all her inquiries for any members of his family proved fruitless, although she in some way discovered that he had grandchildren yet living. Little more remains to be said. Annie was no longer without friends; and when in after days she sometimes looked back through the circumstances of her past life, she never failed to think with gratitude of the manner in which, by the good providence of God, she had been led to appropriate her new year's gift as the event which had been, as it were, the starting point of her happiness.

S. M. F.

REST.

IN our language there are not, it may be, many words of more grateful sound, or more agreeable significance, than the little word Rest. To how many a toil-worn child of sorrow and poverty is its sound as that of the sweetest melody. To many a wealthy and wearied man of the world it is expressive of that good in the purchase of which his whole fortune were well spent; and thousands moving upon this earth regard it as significant of the good for which above all others they sigh.

Nor is its charm, perhaps, the less because it signifies a good for which man so often sighs in vain, and to which he never in this world attains, in anything like completeness and perfection. For whatever may be the cause, man's state here is generally one of unrest. That “man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward,” was well remarked of old, and one of the most prosperous as well as wisest of men has summed up in two words his experience of human life—vanity and vexation; in conformity with which an eloquent divine has observed, that from society's humblest base, up to the golden pinnacle that blazons on its top, you will find something in the shape of care; for as there is