

Family Reading.

New Year Wishes.

What shall I wish thee? Treasures of earth? Songs in the spring time, Pleasure or mirth? Flowers on thy pathway, Skies ever clear? Would this ensure thee A Happy New Year?

What shall I wish thee? What can be found Bringing thee sunshine All the year round? Where is the treasure, Lasting and dear, That shall ensure thee A Happy New Year?

Faith that increaseth, Walking in light; Hope that aboundeth, Happy and bright; Love that is perfect, Casting out fear, These shall ensure thee A Happy New Year.

Peace in the Saviour, Rest at his feet; Smile of his countenance Radiant and sweet; Joy in his presence, Christ ever near, These will ensure thee A Happy New Year.

Frances R. Havergal.

Aaron.

A NEW YEAR'S STORY.

BY JOY VETREPONT.

Aaron sat at his window on Park Street, watching the thick feathery flakes of snow fall silently to the ground. Sometimes the wind gave a little breath and sent them dancing against each other in wild confusion.

All the afternoon Aaron had watched the people and the snow. Daily he leaned in that window, at the side next the State House, and looked across the corner of the Common to Tremont and the birds building their nests; all summer he watched the crowd of people going to and from their work, perhaps taking a few minutes at noon to enjoy the greenness and bird songs, the blue sky and sparkling water of the pond; in autumn he watched the leaves turn to red and yellow and fall to the ground. Winter now, and he sometimes thought this the most beautiful season.

Aaron knew all the people who were regular comers and goers,—the shop-girls and clerks; the lawyers, doctors and writers. That is, he made up his mind about their several occupations, and he had names for most of them.

One man he liked especially. He was tall and fair with just a slight stoop in his shoulders, and a rather sad look sometimes in his face. But such a kindly, gentle face! Aaron could imagine all sorts of good sympathetic and tender things concerning him. One day he had seen him walking with a faded-haired, blue-eyed little boy, who must be his son. He could just imagine how firmly and lovingly he clasped the little one's hand. Aaron felt instinctively that but for this delicate, white-faced little child, the man was alone in the world.

Aaron's own face was white as could be. He had no chance to have color, for all the exercise he could take was in this room upon his crutches. Sometimes he painted little pictures or cut out beautiful cardboard things: He would tend his hanging plants, or talk to his bird, or scatter crumbs on the window sills for the outside birds. Then, besides, he had his books. And sometimes he would make up stories about his unknown friends.

He had everything clustered about him. His books were on a shelf which he could reach from his favorite seat. His flowers, and his drawings and drawing materials, his palette and his paints were all near by. His mother always helped him to the window in the morning, before she went to her teaching, and gave him a good-day kiss. She had striven with what means she had to make their room beautiful. The

alcove where were their beds were draped off with lace curtains caught back by scarlet cord and tassels. There were pictures, a piano, soft gray vine-covered walls, the scarlet bordering to the paper, and the scarlet-leaved carpet. When tired of his outside world Aaron could look within and rest.

The tall man with fair hair he named Great Heart. Then there was Jennie Wren, with her curls and bright smiles and the school-books in her hand; and Robin Redbreast, a boy with brown hair and brown eyes and red cheeks who was always whistling or cutting up capers from a sheer overflow of animal spirits. Gray Sparrow was a little woman who went blithely back and forth every day.

As the darkness crept down on the day our story opens, Aaron drew back from the window and began to build castles in the air. To-morrow was New Year's day, and also his birthday, and he wanted so much to have a party. He wanted to invite Great Heart and his boy, and Jennie Wren and Gray Sparrow and Robin Redbreast.

His thin lips parted with a happy smile, and he did not know of his mother's presence until she laid her hand on his shoulder and said,—

'What is my boy dreaming of?' And then he threw his arms about her neck and told his thoughts.

'And, mamma,' he continued, 'I have all these paintings and cardboard pictures and cone-brackets and autumn-leaf crosses; and these anchors and wreaths and picture frames. And I could give them for New Year's gifts. You know, mamma, I have no one to give them to—but you—and you have lots.'

'But, my little boy, I don't know these people. I can't ask them.' Then to divert him she told him of the beautiful book of engravings which would be his to-morrow. She brought it out and watched for the smile to light his face.

Aaron kissed her tenderly and said no more about his New Year's party. But long after he was in bed he lay with clasped hands and prayed silently. His mother saw him smiling when she went to her pillow, and some tears were on her face. Then she knelt and will be done.

Next day Aaron and Mrs. Gray decorated the room with wreaths and crosses of ivy and branches of evergreen. Aaron had his presents for his imaginary friends arranged on the piano, and the room looked as festive as possible.

'We'll play we have a New Year's party, anyway,' he said.

'Mother,' he continued, 'do you think God really gives us the things we ask for if we say "for Christ's sake" and really believe?'

'Yes, my love, always, if they are the best things for us.'

'Mother, I prayed God last night that I might have Great Heart to my New Year's party, and I said "for Christ's sake," and don't you think God will think it best when He remembers that I never have any parties and sit here alone all day?'

'Perhaps He will, my boy, though I don't see how it can be,' said Mrs. Gray. Then she went to dress for going out. She would be back in an hour.

Mrs. Gray went, and Aaron sat by the window as usual. He was eating a rosy-cheeked apple, cutting it with a silver fruit knife which his mother had given him last New Year's. Just then a little bird came hopping along the window-sill, looking for crumbs. Aaron reached for a bit of cake, raised the window and was scattering crumbs on the sill, when lo! the knife slipped through his fingers and down into the street. He seized his crutches and leaned out to look down on the sidewalk, though he felt sure he would never see his beautiful knife again. A man in a gray overcoat was just stooping to pick it up. He looked at the knife a moment, then up at the house, and there, gazing from a window, was a little pale face lit by a pair of dark, beseeching eyes. And the boy was beckoning him to come up. He turned and rung the bell.

Aaron closed the window with a beating heart, and had just managed to get to the middle of the room when there was knock at his door. He called,

'Comco, indn' a another moment Great Heart was in his room. Aaron forgot his crutches, and stretched out his hands with a movement which Great Heart seemed to understand. He took the boy at once in his strong, kind, tender arms.

The two conversed, and the boy showed Great Heart his presents; and when suddenly the door opened and Mrs. Gray entered, Aaron exclaimed,—

'O mamma! mamma! this is Great Heart. And he says he will bring his little boy, if you will let him. They have no one to spend New Year's with them. And he is acquainted with Gray Sparrow, and perhaps she would come—O mamma, may I ask them?'

Mrs. Gray stood there wondering, while Great Heart apologized and explained. Then he handed her his card Eben Hartwell. He was a well-known lawyer.

Mrs. Gray asked him to sit down, and then followed a talk about Aaron. His boy, was lonely, too, said Mr. Hartwell at length.

'I think Mrs. Gray, we might let the boy's prayer be answered. It would do the children good to know each other,—both are lonely—and I can bring Gray Sparrow with me. She is my cousin, Anice Dare. I have a fancy that your husband was an old school-friend of mine, Rexford Gray?'

'Oh yes,' returned Mrs. Gray. 'I've often heard him speak of you.' Then the two seemed to have known each other for years.

'You will bring little Carle and Gray Sparrow directly, only,—Mrs. Gray blushed and laughed together—'I have not provided a feast. I hadn't Aaron's faith.'

'I'll see to that,' said Great Heart, and he did.

So Aaron had his party, consisting of Great Heart, Gray Sparrow, and Carle. At being introduced, Gray Sparrow did not seem to know her name. Suddenly she sat down and laughed; then they all laughed, and that put them at their ease with each other.

Carle and Aaron were soon fast friends. Mrs. Gray played and sang; then Mr. Hartwell and Gray Sparrow sung duets, and Aaron, the night angel's Aaron gave them the presents he had spent so much time upon.

Great Heart gave Aaron a beautiful little microscope and some fine specimens. But the best of all was that Great Heart promised to take him out on the Common the first really fine day.

Aaron couldn't sleep that night for thinking what it would be like to be out under the beautiful trees and among the people.

After that beautiful New Year's night Great Heart and Gray Sparrow called often and little Carle would spend hours with Aaron.

Great Heart called, as he had promised, and taking Aaron up in his arms, carried him out on the Common. After that Great Heart took him out often, and gradually a tinge of color crept into the child's pale cheeks.

One day there came a carriage-chair for Aaron, and Mr. Hartwell showed him how to operate it.

Not long after that a white-haired minister called one evening, and there was a quiet wedding.

Aaron still has his old room and place by the window, for Great Heart simply took more rooms in the house. He is never lonely now, for there is Carle, and mamma is always at home. Every day he has rides on the common and he is growing stronger. Perhaps some day he may be able to go about without crutches. A great doctor, who comes to see him sometimes says there is a chance. So Aaron is perfectly happy.—Watchman.

Celebration of New Year's Day in the Vosges Mountains.

Towards the close of the old year in the Vosges, where all the old customs of France seem to cling like the legend of the mountain and wildwood, troops of children parade the villages, singing an old song with the well-known refrain, "Au qui l'an neu!"

When the dawn has ushered in the New Year's day, the children offer their congratulations to their parents, wishing them long life and happiness in this world and the next. The youngest child is generally the speaker for the rest. After this, all the children embrace their parents, and each other, and little cakes are handed around.

The grown-up folks, dressed in their Sunday clothes, and gay with ribbons, then march off to pay their respects to one another, and take their children to visit their grandparents, or godfathers and godmothers, where the little ones congratulate them as they did their parents, and each child generally receives a cake and a piece of money.

But there are outdoor sports also. The eve has been employed in erecting near the village fountain, a gigantic Christmas tree—a young pine, or holly bright with scarlet berries. This, with no little merry-making, is hung with ribbons, colored eggs, figures of amorous shepherds and coquetish peasant girls.

All go to visit the tree, and pay a sort of homage to it as symbolizing heaven's protecting care over the village and all who gossip under its branches, or draw water at the fountain. When evening sets in, the snow is swept away around the tree, and the girls, forming a ring around it, sing and dance,—the young fellows being allowed to look on, but not to take part.

There can be no doubt that in this custom, as in many others which still linger among the peasantry in various parts of Europe, we have remnants of the old pagan rites, which, before the introduction of Christianity, were both religious ceremonies and public festivities.

Select Serial.

CHRISTIE'S OLD ORGAN.

BY MRS. O. F. WALTON.

CHAPTER IX.

TREFFY ENTERS THE CITY.

'Christie, boy,' said Treffy, that night, when Christie had told him all he could remember of the sermon, and had repeated to him the third verse of the hymn, 'Christie, boy, the Lord will have to get me ready very fast, very fast indeed.'

'Oh! may be not, Master Treffy,' said Christie, uneasily, 'may be not so fast as you think.'

'The month's nearly up, Christie,' said old Treffy; 'and I think I'm getting very near the city, very near to "Home, sweet Home," I can almost see the letters over the gate, sometimes.'

But Christie could not answer. His face was buried in his hands, and his head sank lower and lower as he sat beside the fire. And at length, though he tried to keep it in, there came a sob, which reached old Treffy's heart. He put his hand lovingly on Christie's head, and for some time neither of them spoke. But when the heart is very sore, silence often does more to comfort than words can do, only it must be silence which comes from a full heart, not from an empty one. Treffy's old heart was very full of loving, yearning pity for poor little Christie.

'Christie, boy,' he said at length, 'you wouldn't keep me outside the gate would you?'

'No, no, Master Treffy,' said Christie, 'not for the world I wouldn't; but I do wish I was going in too.'

'It seems to me, Christie, boy, the Lord has got some work for thee to do for Him first. I'm a poor useless old man, Christie, very tottering and feeble so He's going to take me home; but you have all your life before you, Christie, boy, haven't you?'

'Yes,' said Christie with a sigh, for he was thinking what a long, long time it would be before he was as old as Master Treffy, and before the golden gates would be opened to him.

'Wouldn't you like to do something for Him, Christie, boy,' said old Treffy, 'just to show you love Him?'

'Ay, Master Treffy, I should,' said Christie in a whisper.

'Christie, boy,' said old Treffy, suddenly raising himself in bed, 'I would give all I have; yes, all Christie, even my old organ, and you know how I've loved her, Christie, but I'd give her up, her and everything else, to have one year of my life back again—one year—to show Him that I love Him.' Just to think, he said regretfully, 'that He gave His life for me, and died ever such a dreadful death for me and I've only got a poor little miserable week left to show that I love Him. Oh, Christie, boy; oh, Christie, boy! it seems so ungrateful; I can't bear to think of it.'

'It was Christie's turn now to be the comforter.

'Master Treffy,' he said, 'just you tell the Lord that; I'm sure He'll understand.'

Treffy clasped his hands at once and said earnestly:

'Lord Jesus, I do love Thee; I wish I could do something for Thee, but I've only another week to live—only another week; but, oh, I do thank Thee, I would give anything to have some of my life back again, to show my love to Thee; please understand what I mean, Amen.'

Then old Treffy turned over and fell asleep. Christie sat for some time longer by the fire. He had tried to forget the last day or two how short a time he had with his old master, but it had all come back to him now. And his heart felt very sad and desolate. It is a very dreadful thing to lose the only friend you have in the world. And it is a very dreadful thing to see before you a thick, dark cloud, and to feel that it hangs over your pathway, and that you must pass through it. Poor Christie was very full of sorrow.

For he felt as he entered into the cloud. But Treffy's words came back to his mind, and he said, with a full heart,

'Lord Jesus, do help me to give my life to Thee. Oh! please help me to spare old Treffy, Amen.'

Then, rather comforted, he went to bed.

The next morning he looked anxiously at old Treffy. He seemed weaker than usual, and Christie did not like to leave him. But they had very little money left, and Treffy seemed to wish him to go; so Christie went on his rounds with a heavy heart. He determined to go to the suburban road, that he might tell little Mabel and her mother how much worse his dear old master was. It is such a comfort to speak of our sorrow to those who will care to hear.

Thus Christie stopped before the house with the pretty garden in front of it. The snowdrops were over now, but the primroses had taken their place and the garden looked very gay and cheerful. But Christie had no heart to look at it, he was gazing up anxiously at the nursery window for little Mabel's face. But she was not to be seen, so he turned the handle of his organ and played 'Home, sweet Home,' her favorite tune, to attract her attention.

A minute after he began to play he saw little Mabel coming quickly out of the house and running towards him. She did not smile at him as usual, and she looked as if she had been crying. Christie thought,

'Oh, organ-boy,' she said, 'don't play to-day, Mamma is ill in bed, and it makes her head ache.'

Christie stopped at once; he was just in the midst of the chorus of 'Home, sweet Home,' and the organ gave a melancholy wail as he suddenly brought it to a conclusion.

'I'm so sorry, missie,' he said.

Mabel stood before him in silence for a minute or two, and Christie looked down upon her very pitifully and tenderly.

'Is she very bad, missie?' he said.

'Yes,' said little Mabel, 'I think she must be; papa looks so grave, and nurse won't let us play; and I heard her tell cook mother would never be any better,' she added, with a little sob, which came from the bottom of her tiny heart.

'Poor little missie,' said Christie, sorrowfully; 'poor little missie, don't fret so; oh, don't fret so.'

And as Christie stood looking down on the little girl a great tear rolled down his cheek and fell on her little white arm.

Mabel looked up suddenly, 'Christie,' she said, 'I think mother must be going to "Home sweet Home," and I want to go too.'

'So do I,' said Christie, with a sigh, 'but the gates won't open to me for a long, long time.'

Then the nurse called Mabel in, and Christie walked sorrowfully away. The world seemed very full of trouble to him. Even the sky was overcast, and a cutting east wind chilled Christie through and through. The spring flowers were nipped by it and the budding branches were sent backwards and forwards by each fresh gust of the wind and Christie felt almost glad that it was so cheerless. He was very sad and unhappy, very restless and miserable,

He had begun to wonder if God had forgotten him; the world seemed so wide and desolate. His old master was dying, his little friend Mabel was in trouble, there seemed to be sorrow everywhere. There seemed to be no comfort for poor Christie.

Wearily and drearily he went home-wards, and dragged himself up the steep staircase to the attic. He heard a voice within, a low, gentle voice, the sound of which soothed Christie's ruffled soul. It was the clergyman, and he was reading to old Treffy.

Treffy was sitting up in bed, with a sweet smile on his face, eagerly listening to every word. And, as Christie came in, the clergyman was reading this verse: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

'That's a sweet verse for you, Treffy,' said the clergyman.

'Ay,' said Treffy brightening, 'and for poor Christie too; he's very cast down, is Christie, sir.'

'Christie,' said the minister, laying his hand on his shoulder, 'Why is your heart troubled?'

But Christie could not answer. He turned suddenly away from the minister, and, throwing himself on old Treffy's bed, he sobbed bitterly.

The clergyman's heart was very full of sympathy for poor Christie. He knelt down beside him, and putting his arm around him, with almost a mother's tenderness, he said gently:

'Christie, shall we go together to the Lord, Jesus, and tell him of your sorrow?'

And then, in very plain simple words, which Christie's heart could understand, the clergyman asked the dear Lord to look on the poor lonely child, to comfort him and to bless him, and to make him feel that he had one Friend who would never go away. And long after the clergyman had gone, when the attic was quite still and Treffy was asleep, Christie heard, as it were, a voice in his heart, saying to him, "Let not your heart be troubled." Then he fell asleep in peace.

He was awakened by his old master's voice, and he said, 'Christie, boy!'

'Yes, Master Treffy,' said Christie, jumping up hastily.

'Where's the old organ, Christie?'

'She's here, Master Treffy,' said Christie, 'all right and safe.'

'Turn her, Christie,' said Treffy, 'play "Home sweet Home,"'

'It's the middle of the night, Master Treffy,' said Christie; 'folks will wonder what's the matter.'

But Treffy made no answer, and Christie crept to his side with a light, and looked at his face. It was very altered and strange. Treffy's eyes were shut, and there was that in his face which Christie had never seen there before. He did not know what to do. He walked to the window and looked out. The sky was quite dark, but one bright star was shining through it and looking in at the attic window.

'Let not your heart be troubled,' it seemed to say to him. And Christie answered aloud, 'Lord, dear Lord, help me.'

As he turned from the window, Treffy spoke again, and Christie caught the words, 'Play, Christie, boy, play!'

He hesitated no longer. Taking the organ from its place, he turned the handle, and slowly and sadly the notes of 'Home, sweet Home,' were sounded forth in the dark attic. The old man opened his eyes as Christie played, and when the tune was over, he called the boy to him; and, drawing him down very close to him, he whispered:

'Christie, boy, the gates are opening now. I'm going in. Play again, Christie, boy.'

It was hard work playing the three other tunes, they seemed so out of place in the room of death.

But Treffy did not seem to hear them. He was murmuring softly to himself the words of the prayer, 'wash me and I shall be whiter than snow; whiter than snow, whiter than snow.'

And, as Christie was playing 'Home sweet Home,' for the second time, old Treffy's weary feet passed within the gates. He was at home at last, in Home, sweet Home.

And little Christie was left outside.