

The Fireside.

FORGIVE AND FORGET.

BY LILY R. DOYLE.

This New Year Day, Oh! God, I pray
My heart at peace may be,
With friend, with foe, wh'er I go
May love abide with me.

They come, they go, with joy, with woe,
Each day to fill or lose,
They bless or curse, they make us worse,
Unless our hearts we use

To love and bless with cheerfulness
Our brothers—sons of God—
Forget, forgive, if you would live
In paths your Saviour trod.

Forgive I may. Forget? Ah! nay
I can't forget the pain—
The cruel word so often heard
I can't forget again.

Oh! weary child, in anguish wild,
Your Master prayed for foes;
Forgot the pain and curses vain,
Forgot, forgave the curse and woes.
—Chris. Observer.

THE UNTOUCHED YEAR.

BY BELLE V. CHISHOLM.

It was New Year's morning, and the snow lay white and thick upon the earth. Yesterday the ground had been brown and bare, and the leafless trees had stretched their naked branches upwards to the murky skies. But at night-fall the drizzling rain had been changed into snow, and all through the stilly darkness the tiny flakes of frozen whiteness had continued to come down softly, silently, until in the dawn of the new, untouched year the earth, air and sky were all full with their beauty.

"What a glorious morning!" exclaimed Ward Randolph, as he parted the window curtains for a glimpse of the world outside. "It will be an ideal day to follow he hounds," "Owns," turning from the window to hasten to the toilet for the anticipated chase.

Presently the chapel bell began to ring out its summons to the New Year's sunrise prayer-meeting, causing a halt in the young man's preparations, and a quick change in his countenance. "I had forgotten," he murmured, half under his breath, and then, with a gesture of impatience, added brusquely, "but I did not promise. I told Gesorge I had other arrangements—if it should snow—and a glance outside ought to settle that question." But it did not settle it for him. He sat quiet for a few moments, and then, walking over to the window again, allowed his eyes to wander over the white scene without, as if in search of an answer to the question that was troubling him. On the stand by his side, just where he had flung it, when received, lay the card inviting him to the prayer-meeting. He lifted it now, and on the reverse side read: "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another."

"Will my work stand 'proving?'" he asked himself seriously. "The new untouched year is before me—pure and white and beautiful—just as the snow-world lies outside. What shall I do with it? Shall I mar its spotless pages with blots and stains and illegible writ-

ing, or shall I begin a new, fair life upon the first page of the uncut, unopened year book?"

He waited as if expecting an answer, but no answer came. He must decide—must prove his own work, and stand or fall by it. The white, untouched world stretching out before his vision seemed to be pleading with a thousand voices for the new, unspotted life of a Christian soldier. Realizing that he that he had come to the "parting of the ways," and must choose one road or the other, Ward gratefully accepted the white world's tender influence, and having made his choice of a master, stepped out into the untrodden snow, with the prayer of David, "Wash me and I shall be whiter than the snow," upon his lips. If George Holland was surprised when he entered the chapel he was wise enough to keep it to himself, and to welcome him as though he had been expecting him. The service was entirely voluntary—a heart-to-heart meeting, and every one present felt that it was good to be there. Ward was not asked to take any part in the exercises, but though his voice was unsteady he told the story of his morning's experience, how the white, untrodden snow has preached him a sermon—turning him from a day's pleasure to one of solemn self-examination. "Even the tracks I left behind me in the snow on my way to this meeting must rise up to witness either for or against me," he said, and then he told how, on the door-steps of his own home, he had shrunk from defiling the white earth with his footmarks, and how the thought that he could be traced by his steps had oppressed him all the way to the chapel. "Never before did I so fully realize that 'No man liveth to himself,'" he continued. "Heretofore I had lived a selfish life—rejoicing in my liberty, doing pretty much as I pleased, and congratulating myself that I was a fairly good fellow because I allowed others the same privilege. But this morning, in the glare of the searchlight which this white, untouched new year has thrown into my inner self, I stand aghast, trembling under the mighty responsibility of my existence. If I know my own heart I am sincere in my desire to make the most of my life in the new, untried, unsullied year opening up before me, and yet the way seems so dark and uncertain ahead of me that I scarcely dare to take one step forward."

"You must not try it alone, brother," said George Holland, with a tender look in his dark eyes. "But with your hand in that of the Master all the mists and obstacles in your path will disappear. You will have but one day to live at a time, and you may safely trust its planning in your Leader's hands."

As George took his seat some one began to sing, "Only Trust Him, Only Trust Him." After that there was a very tender prayer service, and then, as the bell rang in a new hour, the little band of worshippers went out into the new year, to take up its new cares, and trials, and lessons. It was only a little prayer-meeting, devoid of learned talks or eloquently worded prayers, but its influence was mighty, and when, at its close, Ward Randolph again stepped into the white world it was with the determination that this first morning of

the new year should also mark the beginning of the new life upon which he had already entered. He was in earnest, and those who were acquainted with him said that he would be no half-way Christian. And they were right. He had taken his stand on the side of Christ, and as a true soldier of the cross he tried faithfully to walk in the footsteps of his captain. He took his place at once in the church, the Sunday-school, and the prayer-meeting, and though it was a cross for him to take an active part in the young people's meetings, he never refused.

The interest manifested at that new year's sunrise prayer-meeting grew and deepened during the weeks that followed. Many of the young people, and those of more mature years as well, were led to seek an interest in Christ while others were "almost persuaded" to become Christians. There was one young man, Lester Raymond, who, in the midst of the reviving times remained indifferent to all that was passing around him. To Mr. Brown, the anxious pastor, he seemed unapproachable, and though too wise to press an unwelcome subject upon the young man's attention, the pastor's interest did not abate, nor was he forgetful of his own responsibility in the case.

One day, after a new attempt to reach him had failed, the old pastor, meeting Ward Randolph in the vestibule of the church, suggested that he should go to Lester and try to interest him in the work in progress.

"But we are not on speaking terms," answered Ward. "He did me an injury and until he apologizes I cannot even talk to him on a friendly basis."

"Then you dare not repeat the Lord's prayer, since to you the petition, 'Forgive as I forgive,' could have but one meaning," argued Mr. Brown.

"You are right," Ward replied. "I see I cannot hold my enmity and lay claim to that prayer; one of them must be given up."

The pastor knew which one that would be, but he merely bowed his assent, and Ward passed out. He felt that he must be alone, and in the quiet of his own room the battle between the old and new self was fought and won in Lester Raymond's favor.

Regardless of the pride still reigning in his bosom, Ward was no coward, and having made up his mind that it was his duty to seek a reconciliation with Lester Raymond, he lost no time in seeking him out and telling him all that was in his heart.

"Now I have faith in your religion," said Lester, after Ward had admitted himself in the wrong, and asked to be forgiven. "Naturally I supposed myself the aggrieved party, and could have no faith either in you or the religion you professed, while your preaching and practicing were at variance."

"Then it is I who have been the stumbling-block in your way all these weeks," said Ward.

"I have made you such," admitted Lester. "You see I could not reconcile your Master's teachings—'For if you love not your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God, whom you have not seen,' with your actions. Even though realizing that there was blame on my own side, also, the very fact of your having confessed Christ led me to expect you to take the first step towards reconciliation."

"And rightly so," replied Ward. "But now that the wrong has been righted, I hope you will come to our meetings. I think they will do you good, and we need your help."

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So the breach was healed, and with its healing Lester's indifference gave way to deep, intense interest, not only in his own behalf, but also in the behalf of others.

"He is one of my most earnest, tactful workers," remarked Pastor Brown in reply to Ward's flattering report of Lester's efforts among the mill boys. "That is one instance in which you have proved your own work and have rejoicing in it."

"And yet, how near I came to missing the blessing," replied Ward, thoughtfully. "Left to myself I would still be blocking the way of Lester's progress—still remain a stumbling-block in his path."

"But the good Father does not leave his children to themselves," argued the pastor.

"Blessed be his name that he does not." And in a low, but emphatic "Amen," Ward assented to his pastor's "Blessed."

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