



A Good Beginning for the Year

"I BELIEVE in beginning the New Year well," observed young Mr. Talkington, as he carved the turkey; "I am not superstitious, but—" "Yes," said his wife, demurely, "I remember how well we began it last year."

"You were to start on a trip that day, weren't you?" queried a guest.

"Yes, and the train, a new one just put on, left at 9:25, and, as you know, we live as near to the railway station



HAD TIME TO BURN.

as one would like to live, for instance, to—"

"A family with ten children, say?"

"Quite. Ned thought we ought to arise at five, thus beginning the New Year well and catching the train comfortably. He ordered a cab for 6:30, so it would reach the house at night; he did this over night and also wound up the cook's alarm clock. When she saw it set for five her face resembled a napping volcano."

"Why not merely say she looked as if you had unexpected guests for dinner?" said Mrs. Brownsmith.

"Well, she did. She was such a good cook that I was blind. Ned duly waked me the next morning."

"With difficulty, dear."

"You waked me, anyhow, and your voice sounded like the dentist's saying, 'Step this way, please.' We hadn't heard the cook go down, and going to investigate I found her asleep. She said the alarm had gone off at 2:15, and she'd been up every half hour since to see if it was five. The volcano was awake then!"

"Oh!"

"When I returned, Ned pointed to the clock on the mantel and said it was 5:17, and we were late."

"Well?"

"Nothing—only that clock was a wedding present and so handsome that nobody ever expected it to keep time. Investigation proved it was just four, and we went back to bed for an hour. I was dreaming that the cook's New Year's resolve was that she would never leave me, when an awful noise waked me. The cook called that it was eight, and as breakfast had been ready three hours she thought she'd better call us!"

"But did you reach the station in time?"

"Yes. In my haste I did my hair with three pins and Ned put on his dress coat and odd shoes—we are both forgetful, you know. We scalded our throats with hot coffee and choked ourselves with overdone steak. The cabman, who had arrived at 6:30 sharp, demanded full pay for the time he had waited, else he'd deduct from the number of Ned's useful eyes!"

"Dreadful!" chorused the guests.

"While he did this the cook gave warning and told me that the cat on the back cellar window was loose."

"Anyhow, if you were in time to catch your train, Ned could begin his New Year fairly well."

"We were in time. To Ned's feverish inquiries the ticket agent calmly responded, 'Oh, yes, we had plenty of time—24 hours and 29 minutes!'"

"Why, how on earth could that happen?"

"The train, as I said, was a new one, put on for the first time on New Year's day, and—the calendar to which the agent pointed told us that to-day was December thirty-first!"

ELISA ARMSTRONG.

She Told Him.

Husband—One of your New Year's resolutions was that you would not quarrel with me for a year.

Wife—Yes.

"Well, you are snapping at me half the time already."

"Yes."

"I should just like to know what's become of your good resolutions."

"You would, eh? Well, I wanted mother to see them, and so I inclosed them in a letter to her, and gave it to you to mail, and she writes me that she never received it. That's what's become of them."—N. Y. Weekly.

As Usual.

"What do you think of my New Year's resolutions?" asked the chauffeur.

"O, I suppose you'll have your usual luck," replied his wife.

"What's that?"

"Break down before you have gone very far."—Yonkers Statesman.

Objectionable.

The man who celebrates Christmas with a public display of vociferous inebriety is none the less objectionable because he is getting ready for a swear-off on New Year's day.—Washington Star.

AT 11:59 P. M.



"One kiss," he begged, "before I go."

"Well, take it; but you cannot have another one this year."

And then the clock struck the New Year.

The Old and New

By PAUL P. HARRIS

He was a young man, tall and well made; that much was noticeable to the pedestrians who thronged the brilliantly-lighted street on New Year's eve. Many smiled in a cynical way as they stepped aside to avoid his reeling form; others looked the disgust they felt, and few, indeed, were they who by word or look evidenced a spirit of charity.

The young man heeded not; he could summon to his whirling brain but one picture. He saw the ghastly face of the corpse he had left, but a few moments before, at the morgue. The body was that of a companion in the day's debauch, a stranger in the city, one of the thousands of unknown. He had lost his life in an altercation over cards, says the Radford Review.

He drove his way through the thickest of the crowd as though the exercise relieved him, and occasionally he pressed his palms to his throbbing temples or brushed the damp hair from his hot forehead. He strode on across the bridge and far into a residence portion of the city beyond. Twice he stumbled and fell, but was quickly up and on again. He turned into a side street and approached a well-lighted church. The services were about to begin and the young man concealed himself in an obscure niche and waited. He was breathing heavily. The organ prelude came tremblingly to his ear. He knew whose fingers touched the responsive keys and he groaned aloud: "The barriers! Oh, were it not for the barriers!" The music rose to ecstatic bursts, then softened again in plaintive diminuendo. It reached his heart and a flood of tears at last moistened his fevered cheeks and assuaged his agony. His head was bowed down as he listened to that prayer in song.

Later, he staggered on to a business thoroughfare and into a private room at a favorite haunt. There, throwing himself into a chair, he buried his face in his hands. His thoughts reverted to the glassy eyes, and wishing to dispel the image, he ordered a whisky straight, and filling the glass to the brim, was about to turn the contents down his parched throat when the spirit of the song prayer came back to him. He placed the whisky glass upon the table and drained the seltzer glass instead. He heard a number of his maudlin comrades enter the bar and he arose and bolted the door to his private room.

When his friends were gone, he thought again of the organist and the last words she had spoken to him: "When you have satisfied yourself that true happiness lies only in the paths of righteousness and are prepared to pray for absolution from guilt and sin, then and then only, may you come to me. I shall be waiting, Fred;" and he recalled to mind now the calm, deep love-light that shone through the mist of tears in the blue eyes had reminded him of pictures he had seen of the Madonna, and he recalled how often since he had nerved himself to do better things, and then he thought of the barriers.

He thought of her as he had first known her, a girl of ten, and how he used to sit in the family pew in the old church down near the river and gaze at her wealth of dark brown hair and long to twine his fingers in it.

Toying with the whisky glass, he said: "In this is the power to carry me on to the loss of self-respect, loss of manhood and loss of everything that life holds dear and, perhaps, ultimately to the morgue, where my glassy eyes may be seen in their cold death stare, while my soul starts on its endless journey in the bottomless pits of the inferno; and do I hesitate, while still I am invited, by the love-light that shines in a pair of heavenly blue eyes, to the life that will lead me into green pastures and beside still waters? and give me strength to say: 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; do I hesitate while the spirit of my angel mother beckons me on?'"

He arose, and dashing the whisky to the floor, threw open the door. "Here, Pedro, here, Fritz, how do I look? I begin to feel myself a man. Are my eyes still bleared? Come, quick, a comb and a glass, soap and water. Brush me up well; I have a mission to perform. A dollar apiece, and put it to good use, fellows, for it's the last you get."

After he had gone, Pedro said to Fritz: "Another touch of the 'Willies,' eh? I have never seen him that bad." Fritz tapped his head significantly and answered: "No, it's the south-side shooting."

A few moments later the young man was rushing wildly up the winding stairs of the church on the side street to the room above the belfry, where a devoted little band was wont to gather on New Year's eve to watch and pray, as the old year passed out, the new year in. He fell beside one of the kneelers and cried: "Margaret, I have satisfied myself that true happiness lies only in paths of righteousness. I pray for absolution."

Far away over the turbulent, sin-infested city, a bell began to ring its message, and from belfry to belfry the good word flew along till the night air resounded with the mad chorus. The young man looked south toward the morgue where the cold, silent body lay, and he breathed a prayer for them who would watch and wait and, pressing her burning, tear-wet face to his, he said: "We have rung out the old, it's now the new, it's now the new."

New Year's Resolves

Better to Make and Break Them Than Not to Make Them at All

SOME facetious individual has defined New Year's day as "a time when men make good resolutions in the confidence of breaking them as soon as possible." But he has much to learn to his own profit who sneers at good resolutions because some men break them. To resolve to do right does not mean necessarily that one will keep the promise, but such purpose, whether outwardly expressed or inwardly understood, is proof that the individual is conscious of abiding sin of some sort.

It is the self-righteous individual who is in danger. Good resolutions are born of repentance; and repentance when genuine is a cardinal virtue. The self-righteous fellow does not resolve to do better because his vanity tells him there is nothing wrong in his makeup. He may go along committing blunders every day and doing no end of mischief. Such a fellow is beyond redemption. Like Ephraim of old, he is joined to his idols and should be left alone.

Doubtless there are many thoughtless and some insincere good resolves made on New Year's day. Nevertheless it is a good thing that many men do begin the new year with resolves to strive after what is higher and better. It is a marked and glorified improvement upon the custom once so general but now, thank God, obsolete, of men going from house to house paying calls and guzzling wine or stronger drink until before the round was completed they were hopelessly drunken.

It is a great deal better for a man to resolve a hundred times and fail in each resolve than to go along contented with his lot of sin and shame. There is hope for a man just as long as there abides in him desire for what is better. It is well to enter into argument with one's self only after due deliberation, but a broken pledge to do right is far better than no pledge at all.

There is nothing strange in association of good resolves with the dawn of a new year. On the contrary, the occasion is one that suggests just such a general practice. The old year has ended. Its memories suggest "sins committed while conscience slept," practices that degraded the moral man, follies that brought shame and vices that weakened body and brain. But memory is not an. Body and mind tell the sensible man that such practices end in physical wreck and moral decay.

The year is new and clean. The sun, just risen, looks upon it for the first time. Men of business close up their pages for the year ended and begin new and fresh ones for the new year that has dawned. They figure out accurately their losses and their gains in the old year, subtracting one from the other.

As the merchant begins his year

anew, why may not the moral nature of a man be renewed if the memories of the past year and the physical shortcomings of the present suggest the need of a striving after what is higher and better?

That the practice has been abused is no argument against its use. That some men have made good resolutions only to break them is not evidence that reform is impossible. Striving after what is right is Godlike. One may raise his standard so high as not to be able to attain it, but there is virtue in every attempt to make better one's life. Indeed one may find at the closing of a long life that he has tried but to fail, and yet his very efforts to do right will be counted to him for righteousness.

The objection is, if it can be called an objection, that men are too much influenced by special occasions for special efforts. There is no more virtue in New Year's Day than there is in All Fool's Day. It would seem foolishness to wait for any such time or season for a starting period in right living. The present is the time for action, and one day is as good as another in the sight of God, as well as of men.

But the man who has put off the day of resolves to be good until the dawn of the new year will strengthen himself and work righteousness by starting out clean with the year. He will only hurt himself by devoting too much time to resolving. What he most needs is to avoid the pitfalls and snares which formerly overcame him. He has need to change resolves into action. It is his duty to retrospect in order to know himself. Each conquest of self is added strength for future victories.

Happy indeed is that New Year's for the man who, having resolved in its dawn to do right, finds at its gloaming that he has been true to his promises.

WILLIAM ROSSER COBBE.

THERE IS HOPE FOR HIM.



Deacon Goodie—Cheer up; my man; you'll be out on the first of the year.

Jail Bird—Yes, but what can I do after being a thief and holdup man?

Deacon Goodie—Oh, you can go into the coal business, or start a plumbing shop.



The New Year's Crowning.

Bring from the islands that lie afar
In the tropical waters clear,
Decked in their pride like a glowing star,
A crown for the glad New Year.
Pick for the brows of the Nation's guest
Who comes to us o'er the snow,
The bloom of the Southland, fair and best,
Where the orange blossoms blow,
And the waters run
To the seas of sun
With a song devoid of woe.

Bear from the Northland's heights of pine,
From the crest of the loftiest peak,
Wherever the snows in the sunlight shine,
A wreath that the bravest seek;
For the New Year comes with lightsome tread
In the morning cold and gray,
Fasting the Old Year nearly dead
By the fringe of his wintry way;
He brought us cheer,
Did the old, Old Year,
And—Well, he has had his day.

Gather the wild, wild blossoms fair
That open in the olden East—
The bloom that laughs at the cold sea air,
For the New Year's welcome feast:
A hardy rose from the Pilgrims' land,
A laugh from the northern lakes,
Where in their might the bare cliffs stand
And laugh at the tide that breaks—
A rose and a laugh
For the New Year's brow,
Fresh kissed by the Winter's flakes.

Over the pathway of the stars
He comes to add a year,
His smiles of peace now nothing mar,
He brings us never a tear,
Hark to the wild bells in the sky
And their music sad and low!
For the old, Old Year, just passing by,
The New Year waits to go,
By the starlit gates,
In his robes he waits,
With his sandals in the snow.

Obolis, ring out for the welcome guest
On land and over the sea;
And North and South and East and West
Fling out your banners free:
He comes with smiles and a song of mirth
And his is a feast of cheer;
Let every nation hail the birth
Of the winsome, glad New Year,
Of peace and cheer,
To the winter skies,
And all the bells ring clear!

T. G. HARRAUGH.