



What Is a Year?

WHAT IS A YEAR? A LITTLE SPACE—A FOOTSTEP IN OLD TIME'S SWIFT RACE—A WRINKLE ADDED TO THE FACE.

THE SPRING'S GREEN LEAVES, THE SUMMER'S SUN,
FALL, WINTER'S FROSTS—THE YEAR IS DONE,
ITS TWELVEMOON COURSE IS QUICKLY RUN.

THIS PROBLEM PONDER, MORTAL MAN,
AS OTHERS HAVE SINCE TIME BEGAN—
HOW BEST EMPLOY THIS LITTLE SPAN.

E. Y. K.

ON NEW YEAR'S DAY.

BY ALFRED RALCH.

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A WEEK from tonight, Miss Chloe," said Will Fosdick, giving the girl a lingering pressure of the hand as he looked at her with that touch of heightened color which marks exceeding admiration.

"Yes, a week from tonight," responded Miss Chloe Davis, with a smile. "Kitty and Sam will be there, and father says his old friend, the bishop, will come to us. We won't have a large party, but we will try and have a good time."

"I am sure to enjoy myself," said Mr. Fosdick meaningly, "when—"

"I know, when Kitty is there! But then Kitty—"

"Kitty be blessed!" said her companion quickly.

"Why, Mr. Fosdick! and your own cousin, too!"

"Oh, she's a mighty good girl, of course; no one can say anything but that; but I wasn't thinking of her just then."

"Really I must be going home," said Miss Chloe hastily. "Mother will be sure to want me. I do hope the weather will clear up before New Year's. This rain has lasted about as long as it's pleasant."

"Yes, that's true. The water is very high in the dam now, and, although we draw off all we can, I'm afraid they're getting too much of it."

"There's no danger, is there?" asked the girl, her face slightly paling as she spoke. "Father has always been afraid of it, you know."

"No; I do not think there is. However, I guess it'll come out all right, Miss Chloe, I—that is, you—I mean!" and Will Fosdick stopped.

The girl hurriedly broke in: "Mr. Fosdick, I must go. Good-by, and don't forget!" and with a wave of her hand she disappeared around a corner of the path.

The little village of Cartersville, in Colorado, had grown and prospered on the mines which made the hills around it treasure houses. Mr. Davis, the father of pretty, dark eyed 18-year-old Chloe, was the superintendent of Southern Belle, and tall, fair haired Will Fosdick was the assayer at the Star of the West. Common interests in their work had brought the two men together in the first place, but, so far as the younger was concerned, he soon found a reason to call on the Davises which had nothing to do with the character of the ore in the 200 feet level. To state it briefly, he was as desperately in love as a man could be, but so far he was obliged to confess with many an inward sigh that he did not know if the girl cared for him. She was always pleasant, always apparently glad to see him, but he had never been able to bring matters to a point, often as he had tried. His own shyness and his real belief that she was so much better than himself had made him stammer and pause until she escaped as she had that day.

The village was built in a long, straggling line down the narrow valley between the hills. Here and there on the hillsides were the mills in which the ore was worked, and winding like a great yellow snake the stage road ran back and forward until it ended at "Carter's," the universal store, saloon and hotel, which might have been called the center of the place. At the head of the valley was the dam built by the mining companies in partnership, which stored up the water used in the mills and which the shrewdest of the engineers about Cartersville did not believe particularly safe. The house occupied by Mr. Davis was in the lower part of the village, built of wood like the rest, and was a pretty place to look at in summer, with the flowers in front, which Miss Chloe had raised with so much care.

For ten days past the rains had been heavier than any man remembered to have seen, and the gullies, which were dry during the summer months, were now miniature torrents. The dam was full, and the wasteway at one side was open wide, while down between its rocky walls the water rushed night and day. And during all that week it rained, rained, rained, until people became seriously alarmed over the possible outcome.

In the meantime Will Fosdick saw Miss Chloe three times. He would have seen her more had it been possible, for certainly there was no lack of desire on his part. Each time he resolved to put his fate to the question, but each time he came away without having done so, and then spent an hour reviling his own timidity, which seemed to tie his tongue just when he wanted to speak. And Miss Chloe! Miss Chloe's pretty eyes sparkled as she laughed in her musical fashion over her own thoughts. Miss Chloe was not afraid, for she knew.

New Year's day came on Wednesday in 1890, and in the afternoon about 3 o'clock Will Fosdick came out of the laboratory of the Star of the West and looked, as usual, down the valley to see the figure of a girl standing in front, and he wondered whether he would have a chance that evening, and if he had it whether he would have said enough to take advantage of it. And as he stood he heard in the clear, pure air a peculiar noise, and turning he saw about half a mile away a fearful sight.

The great dam was covered with a wave of brown water pouring over the top. As he looked this seemed to sink down for a second, then rise again, and a rolling mass of water swept down the narrow valley. The houses in its path went down like grass before a gale amid the shrieks and cries of the people. Fosdick himself was at a height which made him safe, and he stood for a minute or two like one in a dream, pinching



PLUNGED INTO THE WATER.

himself to make sure he was awake. It was all so horrible! He saw a man he knew well—Jack Carter—start to run up the hillside, but the brown monster caught him and swept him down.

For the part of a second Fosdick saw them thrown into a wild heap, and then the flood passed over them. The water struck Carter's store, which stood for a moment, rose bodily and floated, turning and swaying as though with a hideous drunkenness. Then it struck against an ore house and seemed to crumple

down into the surging flood, carrying with it two men and a woman with a child in her arms, who had climbed out on the roof. Once a man's body was shot up by the water until it stood waist high, and the man struggled, waving his arms and trying to escape. Then he was dragged down by the legs by the incarnate cruelty which had thus given him a glimpse of life, only to snatch it from him forever.

Will Fosdick started as though struck by a bullet. In watching the frightful tragedy before him he had forgotten Chloe. Was she safe? He turned and looked eagerly down the valley. For a moment a mist seemed to blur his eyes.



THE RESCUE.

and then he saw clearly the house was not there. By a determined effort he turned and walked slowly back and forward a few times, for he realized that before all things it was necessary for him to be cool and to show a level head. Then he looked out before him.

The flood of water was nearly a quarter of a mile wide. It had evidently destroyed the greater part of the village, and although there was no longer a torrent, yet the current was very swift. To reach the place where the Davis house stood Will Fosdick would have had to cross the water, and this, as there was not a boat in the village, was impossible. There was a chance, perhaps, to cross about five miles down, where the valley narrowed to the Needles, two great spires of rock which had had a bridge thrown across between them for the use of two mines, one on either side, and Will Fosdick started as rapidly as he could walk. It was a dreary trip, with evidences on every side of the awful destruction which had been wrought by the water. He came across the body of a man, the skull smashed in, which had been left on the ground by the first great wave, and with a shudder recognized it as that of Mr. Brooks, the superintendent of the Star of the West. He paused long enough to cover it with stones so the coyotes could not get at it.

About a mile from the Needles, as Will Fosdick was picking his way among the stones which covered the ground, he heard a sound as though some one were sobbing. He halted and listened. There could be no doubt that it was a woman crying. In his intense desire to search for Mr. Davis' house he may be pardoned if he hesitated for a moment before going to the rescue. He thought of Chloe; he was thinking of nothing else, and it seemed to drive him wild—the uncertainty about her fate. Only for a moment, though, did he pause, for Will Fosdick was a man before all else, and then turning he made his way down to the water's edge. There, about a hundred yards out were two rocks, between which some fencing or wreckage of some kind had wedged, and clinging to the wood was a woman. Will Fosdick looked and wondered if it could be done. It was only a hundred yards, but it was a terrible job. The brown water rolled swiftly by at his feet, and down the swirling stream came logs and boards and furniture, making the way almost impassable. If the woman was to be saved there was no time to be lost.

Running up the bank three hundred yards Will Fosdick threw off his coat

and plunged into the water. It caught hold of him with the grip of a strong man and dragged him down until his feet touched the ground. With a tremendous effort he sprang up, and reaching the top struck out, fighting his way inch by inch out toward the rocks. A heavy board charged down at him, and he ducked just in time to save his head; he met a raffle of wreckage and was forced to crawl over it, cutting his leg on a sharp nail. Bit by bit he worked ahead, but all the while he was being swept down the stream, and he knew the current through the Needles must be death. Nearing the lower rock he made a determined dash for it, only to be driven off by a timber and carried down.

For a moment he thought his life had been risked in vain, when the current slackened and he found himself floating to the rock in an eddy. Reaching it and crawling up he lay for a moment to gather breath and a little strength before attempting the rescue of the woman he came to save. Then climbing over the top he lowered himself down. As he saw the brown hair a quick throbbing startled him, and in the whisper of excitement he called. The woman raised her head and his look met Chloe's eyes!

It did not take Will Fosdick two seconds to leap down and seize the girl, to lift her up into his arms and to carry her up on the rock. It was as though he had the strength of ten men! Then holding her tight he kissed her passionately. There was no more shyness, no more hesitation; he had rescued his love from death, and he had her safe. And Chloe put her head down on his shoulder and sobbed, clinging to him closely and now and then trembling violently. Death had been very near to her that day!

"How on earth did you get here, my darling?" he asked when the girl became a little quieter.

"I don't know, Will. I was standing in front of the house when suddenly the water swept me off my feet. It rolled me over and over; it seemed to press me to death. I felt something and caught hold of it, and then I fainted. How long it was before I came to myself I do not know, but when I woke up I was lying on some boards which were floating on the water. I pulled myself upon them and waited. I was sure I would die, and I thought about you—"

"My own love!"

"I thought you must be dead, and I did not care much whether I was saved. Then I cried, thinking I would never see you again."

"That was what I heard, my darling!"

"Did you know it was me?"

"No. I was hurrying down to cross at the Needles and I heard the cry."

"And you were going to save me, but stopped for another girl?" said Chloe, with something of her own tone. "Oh, Will!"

"Well, dearest, I could not leave a woman to die," began Will.

"Well, dear," said the girl very softly and earnestly, "don't you know how proud I am of you for doing it? Don't I know how you wanted to go on and look for me? And then if you had not I should have died. But how did you get out here?"

"I swam out."

"What! Across that awful place?" asked the girl with a shudder, clinging closer to him.

"Yes. It wasn't so bad. I'd swim twenty of them to hold you in my arms, Chloe, and know you love me. You do love me, don't you?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"You never let me know it."

"You never asked me," she answered with a laugh. "But, Will, how can we get ashore? I want to know how mother is and if she's safe."

"We can't get ashore till the water goes down. You could never live to cross that current. But, Chloe, look there! That's your house there, stranded just this side of that point."

"So it is, and there's another looking out of the window. Is it safe there?"

"Perfectly; the water is going down. Is your father at home?"

"No; he went across the mountains this morning. But what an awful thing this is!"

And so, talking over the horror of the flood, and at times talking about their love, the two staid on the rock all that night. Will contrived to make a fire at which they dried their clothes, and by early morning the water had gone down enough to let him carry her ashore. They made their way to the house, where Mrs. Davis kissed and hugged her daughter as one raised from the dead. Mr. Davis came home about noon to find all well and safe. He and Will Fosdick joined the men who were bringing those who had escaped together, and the Davis house was made into something like a hospital before night. Help came from the surrounding towns, and gradually things began to look well again. It was nearly the end of March before Will Fosdick and Chloe Davis were married, but as he was then the superintendent of the Star of the West they had a good start. But neither of them will ever forget the flood, nor the swim which Will took in the swirling brown water to reach the rock where he could rescue the "other girl," and where he found his love and his wife.

A Pleasant Prospect.

Wife—On Christmas day you came around with a nice sealskin sack, and now you come around on New Year's with nothing but a measly little pin cushion.

Husband (gloomily)—And to-morrow I shall probably come around with a sherriff.

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