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THE NEW YEAR.
A flower unknown; a book unread;
A tree with fruit unharvested;
A path untrod; a house whose rooms
Lack yet the heart's divine perfumes;
A landscape whose wide border lies
In silent shade 'neath silent skies;
A wondrous fountain yet unsealed;
A casket with its gifts concealed;
This is the year that for you waits
Beyond tomorrow's mystic gates.
Oh, may this flower unfold to you
Visions of beauty sweet and new;
This book on golden pages trace
Your sacred joys and deeds of grace
May all the fruit of this strange tree
Luscious and rosy tinted be;
This path through fields of knowledge go
This house with love's content overflow;
This landscape glitter with the dew
Of blessed hopes and friendships true;
This fountain's living crystal cheer,
As fall the springs that once were dear;
This casket with such gems be stored
As shine in lives that love the Lord!
—Lewiston Journal.



THE MESSAGE OF THE BELLS
A NEW YEAR STORY
EVELYN MALCOLM

IN THE chill of the October twilight the fire of twigs in the huge front fireplace at Holly farm was as welcome as a rosy face.
Deb sat before it and impatiently kicked her small, rough boots against the clawfooted andiron. Her delicate black brows above intense violet eyes met in a frown, as if she meditated mutiny. Her arms, wrapped in a gray woolen shawl, were defiantly folded upon her bosom. Napoleon surveying his army did not give a better idea of sublime, slumbering strength than little Deb as she sat there.
Poor, passionate, motherless little Deb! She was so unhappy—or she thought she was, which as far as suffering counts is quite the same thing.
"I hate myself—jest! I hate most everything! Aunt Ann sez there's nuthin' wuth a cuss on this airth, but Miss Mirabel Vane has showed me it ain't so! She's goin' back to the city tomorrow—back to the place she calls a theayter, where she makes believe she's somebody else, behind a row of lights. She'll forgit this old farm where her doctor sent her to drink the milk; she'll forgit me fur all she sez I'm so putty, an' I guess she'll be plaguy glad to forgit Aunt Ann, wuth her nagging and Scripture mixed together so it's hard to tell one from t'other."
The ache of longing darkened Deb's eyes as she leaned closer, as if the blazing twigs could furnish an answer to the questions tormenting her.
"The city! How I wish I could go jest onct! Hiram sez he'll take me there on our weddin' journey—but," and the pretty nose gave a scornful tilt upward, "I don't know as I'd care to see it when I'm married to Hiram! I don't know as I want to marry Hiram at all—there! He ain't like city folks no mor'n me."
As if this audacious statement even shocked the twigs! They crackled the louder and sent up fiercer orange and purple flames that transfigured the lovely, rebellious face watching them.

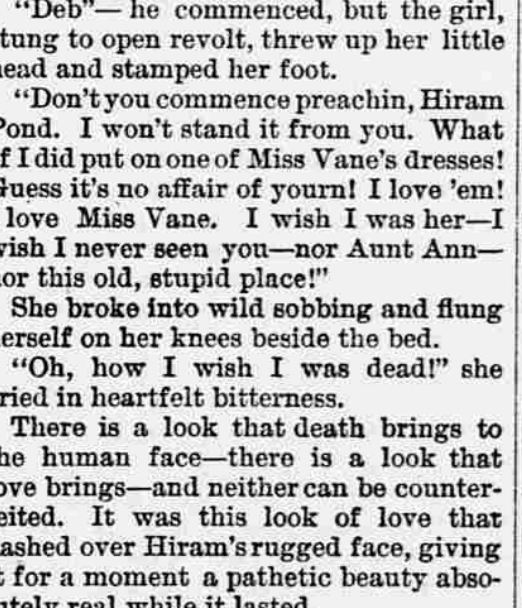


"AIN'T SHE LOVELY?"
The outside door closed sharply and brought Deb to her feet with a bounce in time to see a natty, feminine figure in blue serge pass the window.
"Ain't she lovely—jest?" sighed Deb, not dreaming that her own face was so much lovelier than Miss Vane's, whose coloring on cheeks, eyelashes and hair was so distinctly manufactured.
For a moment Deb stood in thought; then obeying a sudden impulse she slipped from the room, just dodging Aunt Ann at the foot of the stairs. Stealthily, as if she were committing a crime, she dropped to her knees before Miss Vane's door and took the key from beneath the mat. When she stood within the room her eyes were excited as a cat's; the pulsations of her heart ached her throat.
Oh, how sweetly the place smelled of violets! How pretty the toilet table was draped with lace and ribbons!
Deb crept to the wardrobe and cautiously opened the doors. A shimmer of silks of delicate colors met her enraptured gaze. With almost religious awe she leaned her flushed cheek against them and gave a great sigh. In all her life she had never had more than two gowns—one to work in and one for Sundays. There were fully twenty—and such gowns!
With trembling fingers Deb took one from its hook, mastered its intricacies and stood arrayed in it before the mirror, regarding her reflection with rapture, almost with veneration. It was the first time she had worn a low necked gown, and the effect of her white throat and shoulders in contrast to her little sunburned face was positively dazzling.
A smile rippled over her lips as she recalled grandiloquent phrases which she had often overheard Miss Vane reciting. She struck an attitude of hau-

teur and in a sepulchral whisper hissed. "Rather would I lie dead at your feet, Sir Algernon, than desecrate my father's secret memory by becoming your bride! Hearst thou?"
Aunt Ann's shrill voice rose in a shriek. "Deb! Debby! D-eb?"
But she paid no heed. She grew serious again as she gazed at this new Deb—one who acknowledged her own beauty, whose pulses leaped, whose brain teemed with chaotic, dazzling visions of an existence as yet unknown, but where women wore gowns like this and were—happy!
"Tain't no use! I might wish my heart out, and it wouldn't make a bit o' difference! I'll only be Deborah Tompkins all my life, and not in no ways like beautiful Miss Vane."
The abrupt opening of the door broke in upon her suppressed, tempestuous sobbing, and a horrified scream, with the sharp fall of a broom handle across the threshold, had the effect of a thunderclap.
"Le' me set down!" shrieked Aunt Ann, her gaunt and grenadierlike proportions looming in the doorway, iron gray curls bobbing like wire springs, eyelids fluttering, upraised hands quivering in horror. "Le' me set down or I'll faint! Le' me set down, I say!" and although no one prevented she continued to flutter on the threshold, emitting weak screams.
Deb, absolutely colorless, leaned against the mantel, her thick soled, ugly shoes protruding with pathetic incongruity from beneath the shimmering, silken skirt. But she began to tremble, while defiance and pride grew in her eyes, as a footstep so heavy that only a



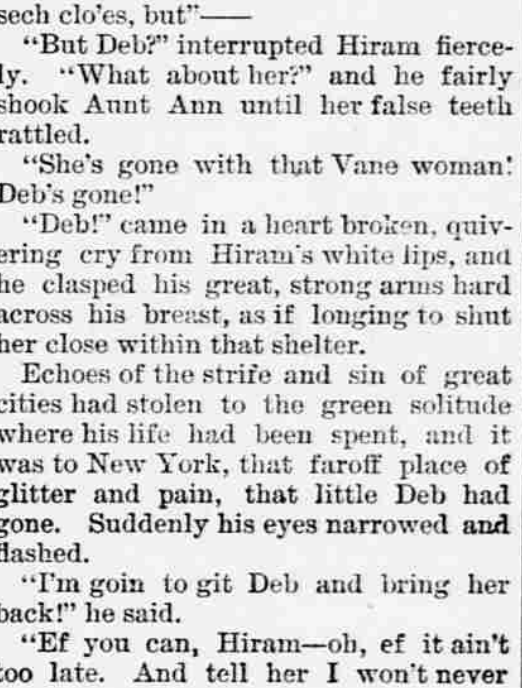
"LOOK AT HER, HIRAM."
cowhide boot could make it sounded on the stairs.
"What in thunder's the row?" cried a hearty nasal voice, and Deb was confronted by her lover.
"Look at her, Hiram!" yelled Aunt Ann, holding her skirt back, as if even at a few yards' distance Deb might contaminate her. "Look at that exposure of pusion; at that ungodly disclosure—oh, vanity—vanity! Heaven forbid that my dead sister should look down on this 'ere sad sight—her own offspring gone over to the washup of Baal. Deborah, Deborah—you air a lost soul! Worm of the dust, whar will that vain heart of yourn land you?"
"Lordy!" was all Hiram could say as he stood dazed, but full to the lips with admiration, suffering from a sudden consciousness of her loveliness and his own uncounted ugliness.
"Deb"—he commenced, but the girl, stung to open revolt, threw up her little head and stamped her foot.
"Don't you commence preachin', Hiram Pond. I won't stand it from you. What ef I did put on one of Miss Vane's dresses! Guess it's no affair of yourn! I love 'em! I love Miss Vane. I wish I was her—I wish I never seen you—nor Aunt Ann—nor this old, stupid place!"
She broke into wild sobbing and flung herself on her knees beside the bed.
"Oh, how I wish I was dead!" she cried in heartfelt bitterness.
There is a look that death brings to the human face—there is a look that love brings—and neither can be counterfeited. It was this look of love that flashed over Hiram's rugged face, giving it for a moment a pathetic beauty absolutely real while it lasted.
Deb's words went through him like a knife. Unable to speak he went slowly from the room to shut out the sight of that sobbing, kneeling figure, to forget her words, if possible.
But he could not forget. As he strode blindly along the road he saw the truth so plainly—Deb was growing cold to him—she was changed.
"Deb—Deb—that look on your face tonight stabbed me! Tain't like as ef I wuz alive quite. I'd rather you'd killed me, Deb—killed me wuth those dear little hands—than look at me ag'in as you did tonight!"
A sob broke in his throat. He stopped at a familiar stile on the edge of the



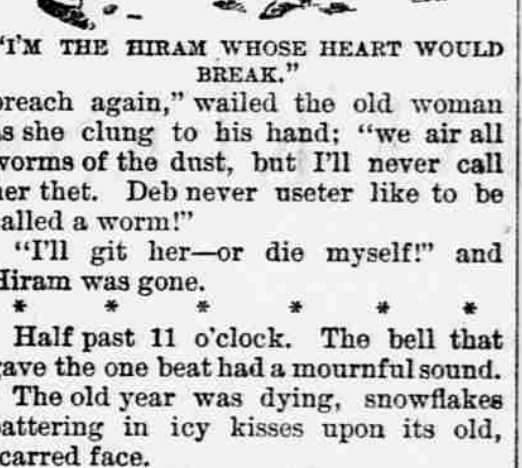
"WHAT IS IT?" HE GASPED.
red October woods, and covering his face with his old soft hat prayed that it might not be true—this awful thing—that Deb no longer loved him.
It was the cold gray and blue twilight of the next day when Hiram again went hesitatingly up the path to Holly farm.



In the interval his generous heart had argued out Deb's cause, and he had forgiven her absolutely.
"Twas jest a longing for fine clo'es and things like that sech as makes gals frackions at times that made her say what she did to me. P'raps tonight, arter she's hed her cry out, she'll say ag'in she loves me—dear, sweet, littl-Deb!"
Aunt Ann met him in the doorway. She was as pale as a piece of bleached linen, and she looked at Hiram with eyes that chilled him to the core of his heart.
"Aunt Ann! What is it?" he gasped.
"Oh, Hiram, don't blame me! I warn't to blame!" she groaned, holding out shivering, appealing hands. "I was mad, I allow, and I told Miss Vane to git out; that I might 'a' known a curse would come from rentin' my room to a play acting, godless critter who could wear sech clo'es, but—"
"But Deb?" interrupted Hiram fiercely. "What about her?" and he fairly shook Aunt Ann until her false teeth rattled.
"She's gone wuth that Vane woman! Deb's gone!"
"Deb?" came in a heart broken, quivering cry from Hiram's white lips, and he clasped his great, strong arms hard across his breast, as if longing to shut her close within that shelter.
Echoes of the strife and sin of great cities had stolen to the green solitude where his life had been spent, and it was to New York, that faroff place of glitter and pain, that little Deb had gone. Suddenly his eyes narrowed and flashed.
"I'm goin' to git Deb and bring her back!" he said.
"Ef you can, Hiram—oh, ef it ain't too late. And tell her I won't never



"I'M THE HIRAM WHOSE HEART WOULD BREAK."
preach again," wailed the old woman as she clung to his hand; "we air all worms of the dust, but I'll never call her that. Deb never useter like to be called a worm!"
"I'll git her—or die myself!" and Hiram was gone.
Half past 11 o'clock. The bell that gave the one beat had a mournful sound. The old year was dying, snowflakes pattering in icy kisses upon its old, scarred face.
The great noisy pantomime at the Crystal opera house had been played for the last time, and at the narrow, dark stage door a group of discharged chorus girls stood shivering.
They disappeared in twos and threes until only one was left. It was Deb—but how changed! Something hard and reckless had come to her young face, the lips and eyes still smirched with the grease paint, her brows bent.
As she waited there a coupe drew up at the curb, and a man much older than herself and very fashionably attired went toward her.
"Dear little girl, have I kept you long?" he asked in a drawing tone. "Tell me—are you discharged?"
"Yes," came in a hard, bitter sigh from Deb's lips. "Yes—there's nothin' but starvation now or goin' home to be—pitied," and the last word came with indescribable bitterness.
Her companion drew her close to him and looked into her face.
"There's something else—there's my love! Say the word I'm longing to hear and I'll take you far away. Say it!"
"No, no!" she whispered, her face paling under the rouge. "Oh, I couldn't!"
"It would kill Aunt Ann! And—and—Hiram—it would break his heart."
"Nonsense, dear. You'll just disappear and they need never know."
Then something heavenly poured in a misty ray from little Deb's eyes.
"And even if they never knew I would know—I, myself," she whispered. The snow muffled the footsteps of passersby, and she did not hear the man

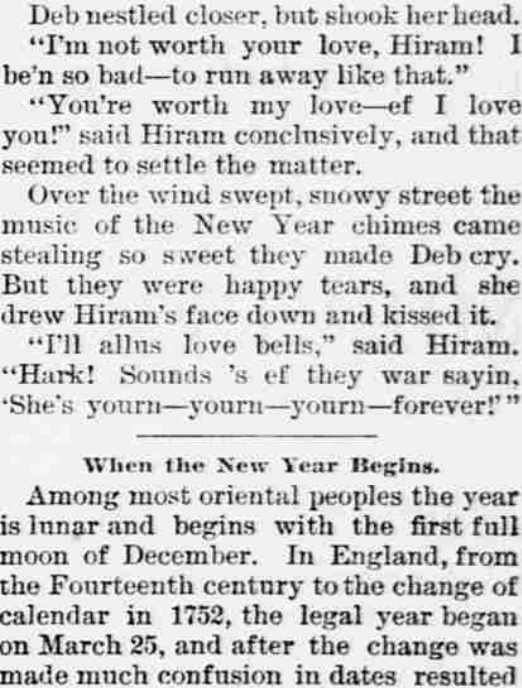


who had approached and who stood very quiet in the shadowy angle of a porch. He only waited to hear her last words; then he sprang forward and caught her to him, looking the fashionable stranger in the face.
"I'm the Hiram whose heart would break—got anything to say to me?" he asked in a voice of fury.
No, there was nothing to say. Retreat was best. In a moment Deb was alone with Hiram, the snow falling around them like a veil.
"Oh, Deb, I be'n lookin' for you everywhar!" he whispered, framing the shamed little face in his big, tender hands and hungrily kissing the pleading mouth. "At last tonight, when I'd most given up, I reckernized you as you marched around in that yaller jacket. Oh, Deb, I love you yet! Do you love me? Will you come home this very night?"
Deb nestled closer, but shook her head. "I'm not worth your love, Hiram! I be'n so bad—to run away like that."
"You're worth my love—ef I love you!" said Hiram conclusively, and that seemed to settle the matter.
Over the wind swept, snowy street the music of the New Year chimes came stealing so sweet they made Deb cry. But they were happy tears, and she drew Hiram's face down and kissed it.
"I'll allus love bells," said Hiram. "Hark! Sounds 's ef they war sayin'. 'She's yourn—yourn—yourn—forever!'"

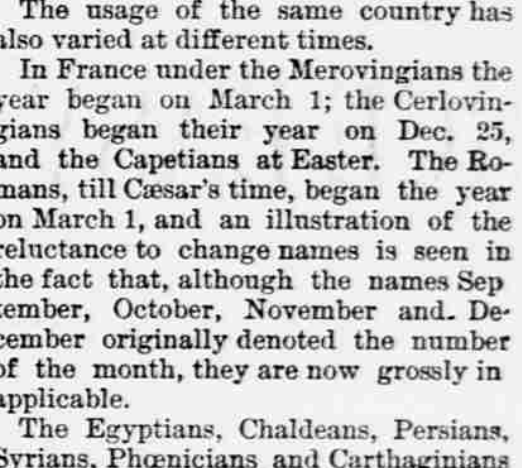
When the New Year Begins.
Among most oriental peoples the year is lunar and begins with the first full moon of December. In England, from the Fourteenth century to the change of calendar in 1752, the legal year began on March 25, and after the change was made much confusion in dates resulted before the matter was fully understood. Even yet a historical issue is sometimes clouded by the difference in modes of reckoning, and it is thus made uncertain whether an event took place in the year named or in that following.
The present beginning of the year on Jan. 1, in the middle of winter, is not a natural but an entirely artificial starting point. The Greek year originally began with the winter solstice, as did the year of most northern nations. Among the Latin Christian countries there were seven different dates for beginning the new year. March 1, Jan. 1, Dec. 25, March 25, used in two ways—first, by beginning the year nine months sooner than at present; second, by beginning it three months later—at Easter and on the feast of ascension.
The usage of the same country has also varied at different times.
In France under the Merovingians the year began on March 1; the Carolingians began their year on Dec. 25, and the Capetians at Easter. The Romans, till Caesar's time, began the year on March 1, and an illustration of the reluctance to change names is seen in the fact that, although the names September, October, November and December originally denoted the number of the month, they are now grossly inapplicable.
The Egyptians, Chaldeans, Persians, Syrians, Phoenicians and Carthaginians began their year in the autumn, as did the Jews their civil year.



Helping Him Out.
Young Tutter—Miss Clara, I have just got a diary to begin the new year with, and do you know what I would like the first entry to be?
Miss Pinkerly—No, Mr. Tutter, I haven't the faintest idea.
Young Tutter—Something about—er—a kiss.
Miss Pinkerly—You might put down the fact that you tried to kiss a girl and miserably failed.



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