

AXLE.

A NEW YEAR'S STORY.

BY ANNIE WESTON WHITNEY.

"Well, Priscilla Wainright, this is the first time in thirty years that you have been able to sit down on New Year's day and meditate. Is your work on earth done? I wonder, or is this only a breathing space."

"You are not an old woman yet, but there does not seem to be any one today who really needs you; any one to thank the Lord that you are alive. It looks as though he has finished with you. At any rate it would be well for you to have your house in order and be ready for any summons that may come."

Any one who did not know that it was Miss Wainwright herself who spoke might have wondered to whom the matronly woman in gray, sitting in the tall, high-backed rocking chair, was speaking, for there was no sign of any other living being and no sound but the loud ticking of the tall clock in the hall, the same clock that had noted the passage of time for a long line of puritan ancestors.

A long look on the front door bell made Miss Priscilla start; not that she was afraid, but she had given her faithful maid of all work, who was a week's holiday, and had as fully expected to spend this day, at least, alone, that she was startled.

"Package, ma'am, please sign," said the expressman when she opened the door.

Miss Priscilla adjusted her spectacles as her maid came in. She had received a few days before telling her that a legacy left her by her brother who had just died would be sent to her by express.

"Heigh-o," she said, looking up. "Where did you come from?" The individual addressed was a half-grown colored girl standing close to the expressman.

"She's an express," said the man.

"The express? What kind of a joke do you call that? Peter Snow?" and Miss Priscilla looked at him severely over the top of her spectacles.

"It's no joke, Miss Wainwright. The girl has come to us duly consigned to you. There is a letter that goes with her that will probably explain."

Miss Priscilla had only time to glance at the outside of the letter to understand what it all meant. This child, a slave, was the legacy. Years before, when she and her brother had parted in anger, he going south to become a slave owner, she had told him she would rather than own a slave. This was his will.

"See here, Peter Snow, this is an express package I refuse to receive," she said, taking off her glasses and turning to go into the house. "Take it back where it comes from."

"I'm a servant, Miss Wainwright, please," said the man. "Please let me show you to see that the goods were delivered all right and then you can do what you choose with them. You can't return the child to-day, for this is the only delivery and the office is closed. It is a holiday, you know."

"I'll hold it, Peter Snow. I won't receive a slave, ma'am!"

"Well, there ain't no one else to take her and I know, Miss Wainwright, you are too good a woman to let a human being stay out in the cold and starve, slave or no."

The word "starve" caused the girl to say quickly, "I'm hungry; I'm hungry."

A curious tumult of feelings surged within Miss Priscilla's breast before a way out of the difficulty seemed to dawn upon her, when she hastily wrote her name on the express book and turned away—a slave owner.

Now Miss Priscilla had been born in Boston, one of a large family, and had inherited many fine old puritan traits and ideas, and with them she had very decided opinion of her own. When she was quite young and slender had left her home, never to return, later, when her father died and it was found that his fortune had disappeared, she constituted herself the head of the family, and devoted her money and her life to the care and education of her brothers and sisters. They were all married and settled now.

The last one had left her at Christmas, when she had had a large gathering in the old Maryland home that had belonged to one branch of her mother's family. She had moved here eight years before on account of the delicate health of one of her brothers, an son who had decided to spend the rest of her days here.

Though she mourned and grieved over the brother who had so departed from the traditions of his forefathers as to become a slave owner, she had felt more charitably toward the other than before, and had invited him to complete the family circle during the holidays. He had pleaded illness as an excuse, and now death had come between them and separated them for all time.

They had both been unforgiving, but if this was the case, they had left it within their power to free the poor slave.

Hurrying into the house and into the room where she had been meditating, she determined to free herself from her own uncomfortable position as soon as possible.

"Children," she said, putting a hand on the girl's shoulder, "you ought to make remarks with the forefathers of the other hand."

wish you to understand that you are free now, as free as air. You are no longer a slave. I won't own one."

With a spring like that of a young tigress, the girl released herself, and standing defiantly before her companion, cried with flashing eyes and a generous display of ivory teeth:

"I won't, I won't, I won't be free now."

Then becoming more excited and stamping her foot on the floor, she continued, "I ain't never had no free niggers, I am home."

Again the girl, which was now really awake, to her horror, saw a suggestive gleam of feathers on the kitchen door, while her pet hen, her beauty, her pride, was in Axle's hands, a shore of all the beautiful feathers from its neck and head. It was the rebellion of the hen that roused her.

"Child," she said excitedly, "what are you doing? How dare you?"

Axle looked up surprised, and seeing Miss Priscilla's look answered in a contemptuous tone:

"Dat's one mean, strong, crowin' hen."

"She's the handsomest hen I have; let her go."

"I ain't burn't off the pin feathers yet," said Axle still clinging to her captive.

"The pin feathers, do you mean to say that you would burn off the pin feathers of her hen? Who told you to touch her, any how?"

"Granby, she makes me do dat to all de crownin' hens—cause of yer don't some one gwine die in de house sence."

"Now child," said Miss Priscilla, "you must for all such foolishness as that. If the good Lord means to die, I'll take us whether the hens crow or not."

"Axle," repeated the girl.

"What did you come by such a heathenish name as that?"

"Mummy say sines all done give out our who me ast'n de next' child come an' dey done name my Axle an' him Grouse. I'm hungry."

"The time the appeal was not less on Miss Priscilla, but the persistent demand for "de brade" "bacon" in place of all the good things offered completely distracted her. The girl's appetite was satisfied in time, however, and then Miss Wainwright undertook to solve this strange problem that had come to her.

"Child," she said—she could not bring herself to call her by the outlandish name she had given. "Tell me now what you mean by saying that you do not want to be free. Surely you do not like being a slave. Such a thing was beyond Miss Priscilla's power of conception."

"You ticks I want to be po' backer, low-down free nigger? Law, Miss 'Cilia"—Miss

threw herself on the floor, face down, and cried.

It was a long, hard struggle, but Miss Priscilla was not one to give up when she once made up her mind to do a thing, and in time she had the satisfaction of seeing before her a closely cropped head in place of the woolly mass, a contrast that almost made her laugh outright, but the child certainly looked less like a wild animal than she had ever done.

But if she had gained one point, Axle had gained one, too, carefully curling all the discarded hair and not exploding till afterward that it was done to prevent the birds from getting it "ter build de nestess." Still, a certain givin' hab'd he headed down her dem' nestess, and, when she twice git some ob it at' plug it up to er tree comers an' kumfure me."

They were a little late, a matter of some annoyance to Miss Priscilla, who objected to having streetcars called to her companion, but her interest in the service soon caused her to forget her surroundings. At last that old familiar moseyin' hymn was given out:

From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand,
With many a sunny morning
Down many an ancient plain,

There their iron chain,

As she sang, tears sprang to Miss Priscilla's eyes, for the hymn carried her back to her old New England home, where, as a girl, she had sung the same words on a similar occasion. Some of the opinion she had changed since then—since mornin'.

At the end of the first verse she was recalled to consciousness of her present surroundings by the sound of loud snoring. She was too tired to continue her repitition of the hymn, but her eyes scanned all the pews within their settled visage, as she wondered who could have so far wandered from the speaker and his words.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU DRINK?

You May Think You Do; the Chances Are

You Are Off.

THE REAL STUFF IS MIGHTY RARE

Bogus Liquors Pushed Over the Bars—
Counterfeited Labels, Corks and Bottles—Ganoiseurs Deceived.

A recent raid on a Chicago foundry and the capture of bogus liquors and a vast quantity of counterfeited labels, trademarks, corks and bottles confirms the charges of the Chicago Tribune that genuine liquor is a rare article on Chicago bars. And Chicago is not alone by any means.

There are thousands of men, relates the Tribune, who would feel little short of insulted if they were estimated that they could not discriminate between good liquor and bad; yet a majority of these men have for years been drinking counterfeit liquor, paying therefore the price of the genuine and at the same time abusing their stomachs in a way that is pitiful. It makes precious little difference what brand of wine or liquor you call for. If it is one that has gained a reputation the chances are that you are getting the original, whether it is domestic or foreign manufacture.

Chicago is the headquarters in this country for the preparing of these noxious compounds for the market and for the counterfeiting of labels, trademarks, corks, bottles and wraps, which are sold to saloonkeepers.

Chicagoans are particularly fond of the "Wine and Spirit Traders" Society of the United States, and through Chicago attorneys this association is just now engaged in the work of raiding saloons throughout the city where these noxious goods are put up, selling the goods and arresting the proprietors. About the only class of drinkers who escape the substitution of goods is the army of beer drinkers. Cordials, brandies, whiskies, gins, bitters and champagnes are counterfeited with almost equal impartiality.

MONASTIC CORDIAL COUNTERFEITED.

This is a famous monastery in Europe where certain cordial is prepared. The revenue from the sale of the liquor form the support of the order. It speaks well for the out-of-the-reverend fathers when it is known that so many people drink it that it took something like 30,000 bottles of counterfeits of the cordial each year.

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