

A NEW-YEAR THOUGHT.

Well, here's the New Year come again—the old one's gone at last. Poor Ninety-seven we'll see no more; its vanished in the past. But on the whole, I think it's been a pretty good old year. And ever in my memory I'll hold it close and dear.

A NEW YEAR EPISODE

BY HELEN A. MORTON.

South Walton, was as new and cheap and crude as the substantial old town of Walton, of which it was an offshoot, was sober, dignified and respectable.

The few public buildings were huddled about the railroad station, and were as plain as the dwelling-houses were ornate, but had the same air of newness.

One of the plainest of these was directly opposite the station. It was a big, box-like structure, two stories high, just primed over with an ugly reddish yellow paint, through which the coarse nails and the pencillings of the lumber dealer were plainly visible.

There was a narrow hall through the building, unlighted save by a glass transom over the door, and a window at the extreme end.

On one side of the door was the post-office; on the other the South Walton branch of the Walton public library, and the inevitable laundry office and small-wares store combined.

A modest tin sign on the left-hand door post informed the public that "E. Nelson, M. D." had an office on the second floor, and the same name appeared in larger letters over the rough piazza, between two windows on the right.

The people at South Walton were somewhat slow, at first, to accept Doctor Nelson, on account of her sex; but Walton was four miles away; those who consulted her because she was at hand did so afterward because they believed in her; then they spoke of her to their friends, and so it came to pass that three months after her first appearance in the place, she had a very respectable showing of names upon her books.

Now all this promised well for the future prosperity of Doctor Elaine Nelson, but such prospective success did not materially alter the fact that New Year's Day found her in the unenviable position of a person with her last dollar in her pocket. She was an orphan; her nearest relative was a half brother, now in the West, and as he had not approved of her choice of a profession she was too proud to appeal to him for aid.

She tried to joke about her plight to herself. She had bridged over many a rough spot in her path by persistently looking at the humorous side, but it was hard to see any chance for a joke on this occasion.

Who could be jovial on the eve of the New Year if in a strange town, with no relatives within a thousand miles; with only bread and butter and an egg in the larder, and only a dollar in one's pocket?

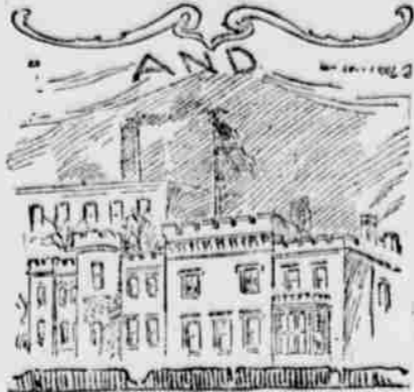
Certainly not Doctor Nelson, although she made a brave attempt, saying to herself—

"Well, one can't starve on bread and milk, and there's coffee and that egg. I only hope it won't prove a bad one. Even if no patient comes in between now and to-morrow, I still have my dollar; I can't starve, though I shall of course be lonely. I am glad I have that dollar. To think of beginning the year with gnawing hunger biting at my digestive organs, and my birthday, too! I had quite forgotten that. Well, I can't freeze, fortunately, in this steam-heated house. I really must eat that egg for supper. I'm so tired of bread and butter, and I shall surely have some office call before night."

But the evening wore away, and no one called except the postman with a letter from her half-brother. This is what she read:



A Happy New Year



Calendar for January 1898. Sun. Mon. Tue. Wed. Thu. Fri. Sat. 1 8 15 22 29 2 9 16 23 30 3 10 17 24 31 4 11 18 25 5 12 19 26 6 13 20 27 7 14 21 28



W.C. PLATE & CO. N.Y.

"Dear Elaine:—I sent your birthday present by express a day or two ago. Hope you'll like it. Thought it safer not to prepay the expressage. Hope you are doing well. No news. All send love. Hoping to hear from you soon."

"Your affectionate brother, JOHN P. NELSON."

A cold perspiration broke out all over her as she read. Suppose that express bill should be more than a dollar!

The night was long and wakeful, but New Year's morning dawned at last, cold and gray and dreary. The expressman came bright and early, with a big box and a charge of eighty-five cents, which she paid, thankful that it was no more.

Doctor Nelson's suite of rooms consisted of her office, a sleeping-room, and a little back room, hardly larger than a good-sized closet, which she used for storage, and where she prepared her simple meals. She ate her breakfast in the office before office hours; her lunch and supper in her chamber for fear of callers. The rooms were prettily and tastefully fitted up, and a marked contrast to the outside of the building. With a little more money she might have been very happy there.

Before getting breakfast she opened the big box. It contained a beautiful fur cape. She had needed and wanted one, but she looked at it rather apathetically. She felt strangely weak and faint. When one considers that coffee, bread and butter and an occasional egg had been her bill of fare for a week or so, it is not surprising. Any one who has tried that way of living will readily understand the situation and sympathize with Elaine.

Finally she made her coffee, spread a little table neatly, toasted her bread, and sat down to her simple meal. She tried to think of pleasant things; to be thankful for shelter—for warmth; but she could only think of the past with sadness, and of the future with increasing doubt and misgiving. Her meagre fare reminded her by force of contrast of the breakfast they used to have in her old home in her father's lifetime. She remembered that there was often some homeless man or woman invited to share the meal with them. How far away it seemed—that happy time. How incredible it would have sounded then had some one said that in the year of grace 1896, she, too, would be fatherless, homeless and hungry.

The tears came to her eyes as she pictured her father's anguish could be know how lonely, how utterly friendless, she felt. Ah, how she hoped he could not know! It would spoil even heaven for him—the dear, loving father, whose loss she could never cease to mourn. She felt that she could not eat, after all; so she drank her cup of coffee, lay down upon the couch, and with her eyes fixed upon the new cape, fell into a state of dreamy apathy.

"It must have cost at least seventy-five dollars," she found herself thinking. She glanced at a diamond ring upon her finger—another of John's gifts. A new fur cape, diamonds, and only fifteen cents to buy dinner! She laughed in a weak, hysterical fashion as the grim sarcasm of the situation occurred to her, and then relapsed into her listless musing, forgetting the untouched breakfast and the lapse of time, although the clock struck eight and then the half-hour.

Presently, however, the door opened and an old farmer, whose wife was one of her patients, came bustling in.

"Good-morning, doctor, good-morning," he cried cheerily. "I had to come to the village for some cranb'rys—mother told me to get 'em yesterday but I forgot, and we couldn't have turkey without cranb'rys, you know! And mother says, 'Pa I wish you'd stop and pay the doctor's bill. I hate to owe anybody New Year's Day.' 'All right, mother,' said I, 'and s'pos'n I ask her to come home to dinner with me? She ain't got any folks, and we ain't got any, for 'tain't likely Horace can come home.' Horace's my son, who lives way out in Minneapolis. So put on your bonnet, doctor, and come right along with me. We're plain sort of folks, but we will give you a warm welcome."

He stopped suddenly, for Elaine's nerve had deserted her at last, and she covered her face with her hands and burst into tears. Over the bowed head of the old man glanced at the little table with its slices of toast, its empty coffee cup, and unused plate and knife and fork, and a sudden comprehension made his keen gray eyes misty.

"There, there, my dear!" he said huskily, as he gently stroked the pretty brown hair. "Don't cry. I can't bear to have you do that. You're about the age my girl would be if she had lived, and—"

He could say no more, and coughed to hide his emotion.

"I hope you will pardon me," said Elaine, recovering herself with an effort. "I—"

"There, don't you say a word! I understand. You're homesick, having no folks round here. It's natural," said the farmer with ready tact. "Just put on this pretty fur thing and we will leave the office to take care of itself. Folks won't want you till to-morrow," he said with a chuckle at the timeworn joke. "Oh, and here's the money. I a mo't forgot that, after all."

Although virtue is said to be its own reward, a more tangible return for benefits conferred seldom comes amiss, and Mr. Hastings felt in a vague way rewarded for his forethought in remembering the doctor's loneliness when, on reaching home, his eyes were gladdened by the sight of the big, broad-shouldered son who was his pride and joy; who was "Professor Hastings" in the city of his adoption, but would never be anything but our boy "Horace" to the dear old people on the farm.

Professor Hastings had arrived during his father's absence in the village. If he was in the least surprised to see the latter drive up with a stylish-looking young lady by his side he did not show it, but his quick eye did notice that no package was forthcoming from the ample sleigh. Remembering his father's incurable absent-mindedness, and having been told his errand, after the usual introductions had taken place and he had escorted Doctor Nelson in doors, he said with a twinkle in his eye—

"Father, where are the cranberries?"

A comical look of dismay spread over the latter's face as he said—

"I declare if I didn't forget 'em again! Jump in, Horace, and we'll go back. It ain't ten o'clock and I'll have 'em yet—with your help!"

The old people were happy beyond their expectation in having their son at home. Elaine was enjoying her first real homelike holiday for four long years; and as for Professor Hastings, when he was not tormenting himself with speculations as to whether that diamond ring of the doctor's was an engagement token, he was happy in dreams of the future time when he might and did persuade her to wear a plain gold one, and the name of Hastings.—Saverly Magazine.

New Year Superstitions.

The superstitions connected with New-Year's are many, and not only harmless, but interesting. For instance, no one must put on anything that is soiled, and, if possible, wear everything new. You must not cut your hair or your nails, and on no account wear a torn garment. If you should be so unfortunate as to put on the left shoe first, or a garment on wrong side, you must undress, even to the taking down of your hair, and dress all over again. It is very bad luck to be late to breakfast, and worse luck still to stumble or fall, unless it be upstairs, in which case do not look behind you, whatever you do. On retiring, place something higher than the bed beside it, on which you can step when you arise in the morning, so that you may take your first step upward. Be the first to speak to the cook, if you can. To have a basket of eggs or a box of oranges brought to the house unexpectedly during the day is great good luck. The salt-cellars must be clean and full, the bread basket well supplied, and money in your purse, and the purse in your pocket. Whatever you start to do on New Year's Day you must finish, or else you will half do all the year. It is also a custom to light a candle at sundown on the 31st of December and keep it burning until the new year is fairly started. It is a very ill omen to have a fire go out with the old year. The finding of money is good if the money is spent for other than the person finding it. And almost any love sign is propitious at this time if there should chance to be a new or a full moon on the 31st of December or the 1st of January.

A Resolution.

As hypocrisy is the tribute which vice pays to virtue, so the mere making of a resolution implies the knowledge of wrong, and of a right exceeding wrong; and to make a determination to discard the wrong is already one step toward embracing the right—is, in fact, embracing it—is, while being the resolve, also the carrying out of the resolve, however little way. The resolve is the outcome of the best part of one's nature; the not keeping it is one's weakness only.

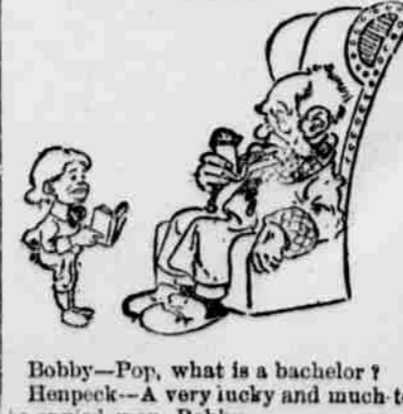
Singing Lessons for Policemen.

In Stockholm the policeman's lot is a happy one. He must first pass an extensive examination, but when that is over he wears a handsome uniform and occupies quarters provided with fine furniture, hot and cold baths and a piano with free singing lessons. The Swedish police system of telephones and electric bells is hardly equalled anywhere else in the world.

Some Friends.

"Dah is some friends," said Uncle Eben, "dat is like de rambow. Dey looks fine an' bends polite, but dey's gone when de sun ain't shinin'."—Washington Star.

PA'S POINT OF VIEW.



Bobby—Pop, what is a bachelor? Henpeck—A very lucky and much-to-be-envied man, Bobby.

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