



His Last Breakdown

B. N. BROWN.

### NEW YEAR'S IN THE SOUTH FIFTY YEARS AGO

By WILLIAM ROSSER COBBE.

THE first day of January at the South 50 years ago presented scenes that would be strange indeed if enacted in this generation.

To the negro slaves as well as to the many white people it was known only as "hiring day."

At every county seat in every slave state it was the yearly custom for people of all degrees to gather, some as spectators, others as actors in the events of the day. By far the greater number collected prompted solely by idle curiosity.

Upon every corner and at every point available in the courthouse square sat negro women with great baskets of "applejacks" (a sort of fried apple pie), gingerbread and persimmon beer which they offered for sale.

During the day men engaged in tests of agility and strength, which ended not in-



Auntie Selling Apple-Jacks.

frequently in a free for all fight in which fists only were used and after which no arrests were made. In those New Year days the "runshops," as they were called, did a hand office business. Whisky was plentiful and cheap, and the prejudice against drunkenness was by no means so general then as now.

The focal point of interest, however, was the hiring out of negroes for the ensuing year. Now and then negroes were offered for public sale, but that practice was not so common then as in the earlier part of the century.

Planters neither hired out their slaves, nor did they employ those of other people. But those belonging to minor children and widows, as well as many who were "chattels" of residents of the towns and villages were commonly "hired out," especially if they had been taught trades, or were good cooks or house servants. Many town residents possessed slaves beyond their home needs, and these were "hired out" to others who might require their services.

The contract lasted for the calendar year only. It must be renewed annually, if desired by the master of the slave.

Much misconception obtains as to the disagreeableness and shame of this practice. Masters had a direct pecuniary interest in their slaves, and it was to their interest to see to it that these secured humane employers. As far as it was possible, each slave was permitted to choose the person for whom he would work. Some there were who remained with the same employers year by year for many years.

Those that were good servants had no difficulty in choosing desirable employers. Very frequently the master left this matter entirely in the hands of the slave.

After all, though, there were those who were practically worthless, and these were "hired out" at auction to the highest bid-

der. This, also, was commonly the practice as to "cornfield niggers" and unskilled laborers generally, of both sexes.

There were pathetic scenes now and then when negroes were sold at public auction on New Year's day. Very rarely it chanced that at such times members of the same family were sold to masters widely separated.

It should appeal to the common sense of any man that slaves being valuable holdings, their owners would neither treat them cruelly nor permit them to be abused by others. Owners of valuable horses uniformly are kind to them, and horses are not human.

In this Southern New Year's day, too, men met to settle long due debts, to pay notes and to rent farm lands. Taken together, it was a busy, busy day, full of its comedies as well as its dramas, and, sometimes, tragedies.

At such times the slaves of the plantations enjoyed their annual two weeks' vacation and these crowded the villages to buy all manner of gimcracks—cheap jewelry, ribbons and laces, and, having a sweet tooth, cheap candies as well. Any well-ordered slave could make "overtime" money, and it was a very sorry one, indeed, who had not a few dollars at the New Year, to throw away in folly upon a wife or a sweetheart.

The "white trash" gathered then solely with a view to looking on and to picking up what they could. As they were despised by both the well-to-do whites and the negroes of all degrees, they usually kept to themselves. They neither hired nor were hired, but in some manner contrived to secure their full share of whisky.

Like the old "general muster" day of the ante-bellum days, the "afo' de wahl" New Year has passed away with all its scenes and shiftings, yet the memory of it remains with the older residents as a reminder that one day at least, and that the initial one, of the Southland, was one of potential energy and signally characteristic in its incidents of the age and times.

**Had the Same Effect.**

"I heard that Jack's fiancée has made him give a New Year's promise to stop smoking."

"That so? Well, mine has not said a word about giving up the weed, but our engagement has just the same effect."

"How so?"

"Every time I call all the cigars in my vest pocket manage to get crushed, and, of course, I don't smoke them!"—Baltimore Herald.

**Plans for the New Year.**

Now man resolves to strive anew  
And in the coming year win more  
Of that which misers fasten to  
Than he has ever gained before.

His wife applauds him and sits down  
Considering how she will show  
A few new glides to the town  
If hubby gets his schemes to go.  
—Chicago Record-Herald.

**TRUE TO HIS RESOLUTION.**

The Little Fellow—Strike me if yer wants ter. I've resolved never ter lift me hand in anger agin' another agin'.

**Economy of Labor.**

"He is one of the most resourceful lazy men I ever knew."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because, instead of writing out his good resolutions, he cut the page for January 1, 1902, from his old diary and pasted it in under 1903."—Chicago Post.

**Making Them Comfortable.**

Cor.—Oh, papa, why have you moved the sofa out into the middle of the room?"

Papa—I thought you would want it there, since you have hung the mistletoe on the chandelier.—Town Topics.

**As the Old Year Fades.**

No, you needn't call me early, needn't call me, mother dear.  
I'll know without your waking me that tis the glad New Year.  
For every whistle in the town will blow from 12 to 3.  
And boys with daddinged horns, mother, will tout a few for me.  
—Chicago Tribune.

**Two Resolutions That Failed**

By ELISA ARMSTRONG BENGOUGH.

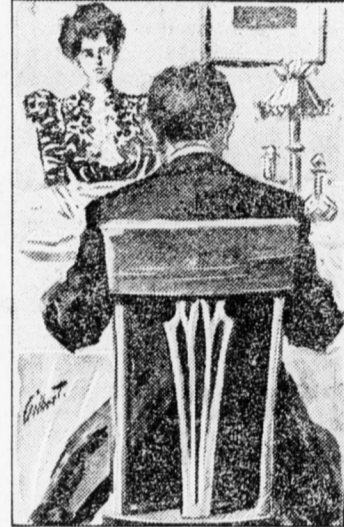
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**Y**OU were going to give your husband a lovely surprise for New Year's; do tell me how it turned out!" said the bride's friend. "Did you carry out your intention?"

"I did, and I can safely say that I will never give him another surprise as long as I live. You see, he had resolved not to lose his temper or complain about anything about the house for the entire year. I was so pleased that I wanted to do something awfully nice in return. Finally, I decided to become a model housekeeper, and, by way of showing the depth of my resolve, I decided to cook his New Year's dinner myself."

"H'm, perhaps it was as well that he did resolve to keep his temper for an



"I've Resolved Not to Lose My Temper."

entire year. Fudge and angel's food are not very filling for a hungry man."

"Fudge and angel's food—the idea! I decided on a menu of six courses, and spent ten days in looking up the recipes for it and studying them. Unfortunately, the exertion made me so tired that I became mentally upset and was apt to confuse a recipe for Italian cream with one for creamed lobster, and they are very different. However, when New Year's day really came and Harry said that he must spend the greater part of it at the office going over his accounts I felt that success was sure."

"By the way, haven't you a good cook? And didn't you let her help and advise you?"

"She wanted to, but I told her that she needed a holiday and must take it while I got the dinner. She then confessed that she didn't want to go out because her beau was coming to see her and would be offended if she was out. I told her that made no difference; that what you did on New Year's day you did the year round and if she did not work on that day she would doubtless be married to a millionaire and living a life of luxurious idleness within six months."

"Humph. Did she go then?"

"She did. Then I set to work, and, oh, how I did work, but somehow nothing was—well, quite like the pictures in the household magazines. The odor of things burning, too, became so strong that the man from next door—a perfect stranger—came over to see if the house was on fire and if he could be of any use."

"Well, luckily, you could air the whole place thoroughly before Harry came home."

"I did. By noon I had cooked enough to feed a regiment—dinner was at three—but somehow it did not seem very appetizing, so I decided to have only four courses; that was a more economical dinner for a young couple anyhow. When Harry arrived, promptly at three, I was all ready and trying to look as if I felt cool and hide the two burned and one cut finger. I had decided that three courses were enough for anybody save a giutton, by that time."

"Well, I am sure that everything was very nice."

"It—well, it was not quite perfect; I had forgotten to stuff the chickens and I had put salt in the cranberries instead of sugar; but that was more detail, for the table looked lovely with all my best linen, embroideries, silver, glass and china on it. As I wanted to surprise him thoroughly, I did not tell him that I had cooked it myself—I meant to tell him that at the very last."

"As a sort of postscript to the dessert. How nice!"

"H'm. Well, though he had said he was wildly hungry, he did not eat—just played with things. He kept starting to speak, too, and then shutting his mouth tight without saying a word. Something was wrong with the coffee, though I had put in twice as much as the cook book said. As he set down his cup, well, rather more forcefully than was quite necessary, he said: 'Well, dear, it is New Year's day, and I have resolved not to lose my temper for an entire year, but I must say one thing: the girl who cooked that dinner must be dismissed before to-morrow's sun is up. A woman who would give a hungry man underdone chicken, overdone potatoes and asbestos pie, would be capable of murdering us in our beds!'"

"Oh, well, you need never tell him that you cooked that dinner."

"I didn't tell him, but he undertook to discharge the cook, and she did!"

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### TURNING A NEW LEAF A NEW YEAR'S STORY

By MANDA L. CROCKER.

**M**RS. MARCIA BERRIE had been mistress of the Shelly Farms for only a few short months; but long enough, after all, for every one in the neighborhood to have an opinion of John Berrie's second wife.

She dressed finer than his first wife did—most second wives do—she spent more hours at the piano, and seemed several degrees more aristocratic than the first Mrs. Berrie.

It was an honored custom, reaching back to the stouter branches of the ancestral tree, for the owner of the Farms to give a New Year's dinner to the countryside; and each guest was invited to come and "turn a new leaf for yearly luck."

Of course, it was the "firsts," and not the "seconds" or "thirds," as the shippers say, who enjoyed these annual feasts and, usually, they began several weeks before to plan "what to wear." This year it seemed a necessity to be a little more particular about the cut of gowns and width of trimmings, for the new Mrs. Berrie was a lady of means in her own right, and dressed elaborately.

"We must make an impression," said Mrs. Wilton, decisively, "and she must feel that our presence is an honor to the Farms. I intend to have a new silk; a regular dinner party dress."

And so the "firsts" planned to surpass all former efforts, for the sake of profound impression; therefore, by the middle of December a score of lovely new gowns were the pride of as many ambitious feminine owners.

The mistress of Shelly Farms was affable and gracious to all, and the tony "firsts" were just dying to display their rich costumes in her honor. But for some unaccountable reason the invitations were tardy.

Could it be possible that the second wife was one of those new women, who would, at one fell swoop, eliminate the annual dinner? And would John Berrie stand that?

In sheer desperation of suspense, Mrs. Goldwaite was delegated to call at the Farms, ostensibly to speak of a philanthropic movement, but really to scent the New Year festivities and overdue cards.

Mrs. Berrie received her visitor very courteously and pleasantly, and supported the philanthropic idea enthusiastically, even graciously accepting the presidency of the society when they should organize. But when the conversation drifted into holiday news the caller could, by any tact, draw out the bride's plans concerning New Year's day. Exasperated, Mrs. Goldwaite suddenly let go skirmishing and asked her, point blank, "If the Farms would give annual dinner this year?"

"O, certainly," answered the new wife, her face lighting up with pleasure, "husband and I have been planning for that some time. The invitations are late, but Mr. Berrie could not help me until to-day, and, of course, I am not well enough acquainted to get the names alone. We shall send them this week, however, and

at the adroitness of their "feint" and its success.

The expectant "firsts" were all agog for a few days, looking for invitations; but, strange to say, not one of them received the familiar square envelope with the Berrie coat-of-arms in the corner, and things were once more fast assuming the mysterious.

But everything was made exceedingly plain, finally, by the busom Mrs. Meigs, washer-woman for a trio of the immaculate set.

"And it's me and mine who are goin' to have a fine dinner on New Year's day!"



"Naw, Yer Awag Off!"

she boasted to Mrs. Wilton on the next Monday morning, as she ran her broad hand through the steaming suds.

"Some one going to send you a nice basket?" queried Mrs. Wilton, thinking at once of the benevolent president to be.

"Naw! yer awag off!" laughed the woman of labor. "We've an invitation to the New Year's dinner at Shelly Farms; got it in a fine cover with the Berrie army coat blazed onto the corner of it."

"Why Mrs. Malinda Meigs!" exclaimed the astonished Mrs. Wilton, "you are not joking me?"

"No, ma'am, I'm not," giving the handle of the wringer an emphatic yank; "it's the Bible truth. And I was so tickled at what she writ onto the gold-edged card, she sent me."

"What was that?" asked Mrs. Wilton, desperately, the awfulness of a philanthropic "movement" gripping her heart-strings.

"Why, she writ that 'she and her husband would turn the new leaf themselves this time and invite the worthy poor to dine with them on New Year's day.' And now," dropping her voice to one of pleasant interrogative, "where be you going to dine, New Year's, ma'am?"

"I hardly know yet," answered Mrs. Wilton, truthfully; then she fled to the closet and studied the fine, new dinner dress, with conflicting thoughts.

For a young chit from college to come lording it into their midst and make such unkind of snubbing plans in her endeavor to appear peculiar, was simply outrageous! The Shelly Farms' new leaf was perfectly abominable! Something would have to be done to offset this disgusting philanthropy.

By four o'clock that afternoon Mrs. Wilton had made the rounds of the insulted elite of the countryside; and a swell

dinner party had been arranged for, at Mrs. Goldwaite's, for three solid reasons. First, to air their new toilettes; second, to soothe one another in their common grievance, and third, the Goldwaite cottage was so situated that they could easily see the coarse tide of the "seconds"—and possibly the "thirds"—flow to the farms.

Punctually at the appointed time the outraged upper current gathered at the appointed place to see the outrageous under current set toward the philanthropic president.

By three o'clock all the indigent but respectable people of the neighborhood had gone by in their Sunday best.

"Onions and Sauerkraut!" drawled Mr. Wilton, as a German family passed on foot.

"Our white necktie brigade," commented another "first," as the pastor of a poor church, a mile away, and the superintendent of its Sunday school, together with a dozen scholars, went by in a double sleigh. And the "firsts" rustled their silks and smiled in aristocratic contempt.

Before the Goldwaite party broke up, however, a messenger from the Farms bowed himself into their midst and out again, leaving the hostess looking suspiciously at a message in her hand, with "the army coat blazed onto the corner," as Mrs. Meigs would have said. She glanced timidly around the expectant circle and finally drew forth a daintily perfumed note and read:

"A very happy New Year to all! It has occurred to us, dear people, that you may not have comprehended our motive in bidding our guests for the day. As we all are interested in philanthropic work, we will be understood when we say, the new leaf we turned is very timely and beautiful, and has made many hearts happy. Husband and I turned the leaf suggested by Luke, the beloved physician. We knew you were all well able to return the compliment, and so we had those who could not recompense us.

"We extend greetings and desire that you all rejoice with us. Mr. and Mrs. John Berrie, Shelly Farms."

The "firsts" looked soberly at each other; the spirit of the note touched the good in them and the new dinner dresses were, for the time, forgotten.

"Yes," they said, "the whole neighborhood has enjoyed a Happy New Year today. Surely it is a pleasant new leaf!" But the philanthropic society has never been organized, although the prospective president is ready and waiting.

**FOR FUTURE CONSUMPTION.**

"Judge, I want to swear off to-day. What'll you charge for a pledge?"

"Twenty-five cents."

"Can't you make it five for a dollar?"

**A Genuine Plie.**

Johnny Jones—Did you have fun watching the old year out and the new year in?

Willie Boorum—Did I? Say! I watched my sister and her beau watch the old year out and the new year in!—Brooklyn Eagle.

**THE COMING OF THE NEW YEAR**

WHY did they ring the bells last night  
In steeples white and tall?  
Why was the earth with joy bedight?  
The soft snow over all;  
Was it a dream, or did I hear  
A sound beneath my lid,  
While winter's starlight, cold and clear,  
Revealed the sleeping hill?

**DAY** nay, the New Year came last night,  
Another year was born;  
His footprints in the fleecy white  
The watchers saw this morn;  
The newborn guest is at the door,  
A smile upon his brow;  
But he will leave us old and poor  
A fleeting year from now.

**B**LESS the bells that ring him in,  
With many a song and shout,  
Ere long, I know, amid earth's din  
They'll gladly ring him out;  
But while he tarry as our guest  
Let there be ringing cheer;  
He'll be the friend we love the best—  
The winsome, glad New Year!

**H**AVE at his beck the birds will sing,  
In Springtime's scented bowers,  
And from beneath his feet will spring  
God's sweetest, fairest flowers;  
He'll tarry till the Summer weaves  
Her web of many hues,  
And Autumn 'mid her golden sheaves  
Her happiness renews.

**F**OR him the songsters of the dells  
Will strain their clearest strains,  
And buttercups and lily beds  
Will deck the woods and plains;  
His skies will wear the softest blue,  
The brook that seeks the sea  
Will have a song for me and you,  
Beneath the stately tree.

**N**OR will he leave us till we see more  
The earth is robed in snow,  
And on the ever-sounding shore  
The winds of winter blow;  
Then, leaning on his own good staff,  
Kindhearted, old and gray,  
The vintage of the year is' quaff  
And slowly pass away.

**C**Hoice fill and let him know  
That love for him is strong,  
Amid the softly falling snow  
O greet him with a song;  
From pole to pole, from sea to sea,  
In accents loud and clear,  
Let every heart be glad and free  
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His footprints in the fleecy white  
The watchers saw this morn;  
The newborn guest is at the door,  
A smile upon his brow;  
But he will leave us old and poor  
A fleeting year from now.

**B**LESS the bells that ring him in,  
With many a song and shout,  
Ere long, I know, amid earth's din  
They'll gladly ring him out;  
But while he tarry as our guest  
Let there be ringing cheer;  
He'll be the friend we love the best—  
The winsome, glad New Year!

**H**AVE at his beck the birds will sing,  
In Springtime's scented bowers,  
And from beneath his feet will spring  
God's sweetest, fairest flowers;  
He'll tarry till the Summer weaves  
Her web of many hues,  
And Autumn 'mid her golden sheaves  
Her happiness renews.

**F**OR him the songsters of the dells  
Will strain their clearest strains,  
And buttercups and lily beds  
Will deck the woods and plains;  
His skies will wear the softest blue,  
The brook that seeks the sea  
Will have a song for me and you,  
Beneath the stately tree.