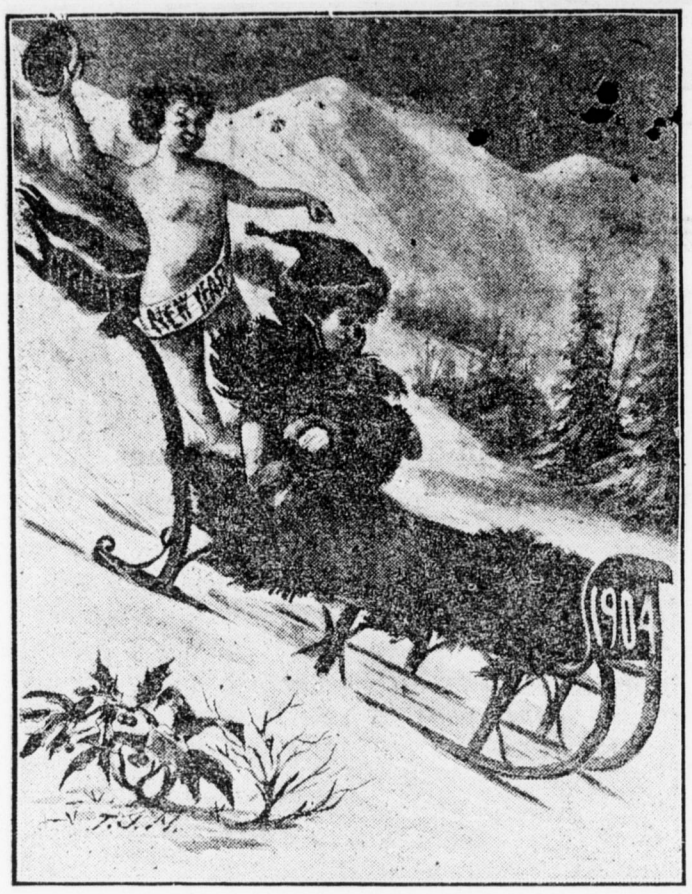


A Good Beginning for the Year

"I BELIEVE in beginnning the New Year well," observed young Mr. Talkington, as he carved the turkey; "I am not superstitious, but—"

"Yes," said his wife, demurely, "I remember how well we began it last year."

"You were to start on a trip that day, weren't you?" queried a guest.

"Yes, and the train, a new one just put on, left at 9:25. Ned said we should arise at five, thus beginning the New Year well and catching the train comfortably. He ordered a cab for 6:30, so it would reach the house at night;

HAD TIME TO BURN.

he did this over night and also wound up the cook's alarm clock. Ned duly waked me the next morning."

"With difficulty, dear."

"You waked me, anyhow, and your voice sounded like the dentist's saying, 'Step this way, please.' We hadn't heard the cook go down, and going to investigate I found her asleep. She said the alarm had gone off at 2:15, and she'd been up every half hour since to see if it was five. The volcano was awake then!"

"Oh!"

"When I returned, Ned pointed to the clock on the mantel and said it was 5:17, and we were late."

"Well?"

"Nothing—only that clock was a wedding present and so handsome that nobody ever expected it to keep time. Investigation proved it was just four, and we went back to bed for an hour. I was dreaming that the cook's New Year's resolve was that she would never leave me, when an awful noise waked me. The cook called that it was eight, and as breakfast had been ready three hours she thought she'd better call us!"

"But did you reach the station in time?"

"Yes. In my haste I did my hair with three pins and Ned put on his dress coat and odd shoes—we are both forgetful, you know. We scalded our throats with hot coffee and choked ourselves with overdone steak. The cabman, who had arrived at 6:30 sharp, demanded full pay for the time he had waited, else he'd deduct from the number of Ned's useful eyes!"

"Dreadful!" chorused the guests.

"While he did this the cook gave warning and told me that the catch on the back cellar window was loose.

"We were in time. To Ned's feverish inquiries the ticket agent calmly responded, 'Oh, yes, we had plenty of time—24 hours and 29 minutes!'"

"Why, how on earth could that happen?"

"The train, as I said, was a new one, put on for the first time on New Year's day, and—and the calendar to which the agent pointed told us that to-day was December thirty-first!"

ELISA ARMSTRONG.

Their New Year's Dinner

"SO you went to Isabel's New Year's dinner?" said the brunette. "Lucky you! Tom and I dine with his mother on the first day of each year, listening to a discourse on economy which lasts from oysters to coffee."

"Knowing that all your bills will be in the next morning's mail, too," cried the blonde. "Yes, we accepted Isabel's invitation, and—"

"How do you like Isabel's new dress? Is it as cold as—"

"Her reception of a tardy guest? Not quite. I was ready at only ten minutes after the last moment at which we could safely start—and if that is not being punctual, I'd like to know what is! 'Eleven sharp!' Jack called to the driver, and then I looked up to see—Isabel's old house!"

"When the dinner was given to display the new one?"

"Exactly. After running a block through the snow in his thin shoes and nearly being arrested as an escaping thief, Jack got the driver to return. Once inside, he declared I hadn't told him Isabel had moved."

"Because he had kept on reading his paper while you told him about it?"

"Yes. I had even told him how the bathroom was tiled. But, dear, I had forgotten whether the new number was 250 or 2550."

"What on earth—"

"Jack threatened to go home and get dinner on the chafing dish—the cook had holiday. Then I remembered thoughtfully writing out the address while Mae and I discussed that new dressmaker, and putting it in Jack's waistcoat pocket, because I am so forgetful."

"How thoughtful."

"Jack gave the slip to the driver and promised him something awful to drive fast."

"Then your troubles were ended?"

"N—no. I had written down the ad-

JACK WAS WAITING.

dress of the new dressmaker, instead of Isabel's."

"And you were no better off than before?"

"Worse. Jack's language was awful. I said we could just drive along the avenue until we came to the house, which I would recognize immediately."

"So—"

"He said we were invited to dinner, not to breakfast. Then he asked the driver if he happened to know where Mrs. De Style lived."

"Nonsense. He—"

"He knew. It was about six blocks from our house. Stupid of Jack not to have asked sooner. And he seemed to think the whole affair my fault!"

"Well, you reached Isabel's after all."

"Ye-es, in time for the salad. And—and I really should not like to repeat the things our hostess said when she had a chance to speak to me alone."

A New Year Conquest

By CHARLES MOREAU HARGER

A Story of the Great Southwest

GREAT clouds of yellow dust, a dazzling blue sky, sweeping winds, long reaches of level lands—the midwinter southwest, and on the siding the palatial train of the cattle king who was now off among the ranches looking after sleek and well-bred herds.

The cattle king's daughter, whose prospective wealth entitled her to the rank of princess, sat under the striped awning on the rear platform of the train, gazing wearily at the monotonous landscape.

"How long are we to stay here?" she demanded of the porter who was industriously trying to keep the leather-covered chairs clean. He did not answer—he did not know. She went back to the parlor of the other private car and accosted the quiet woman who sat by the window sewing. "Auntie, how long is this to last?"

"Until your father gets back or there are orders."

"I'm tired of it—I'm going out of doors."

She seized a jacket and cap, slipped down the side steps and disappeared behind the squalid depot. A dilapidated livery stable stood in the sunshine. "I want a riding horse—quick!"

The man fairly trembled in his anxiety to serve the city girl, and in a moment she was cantering over the sand and sage brush, headed straight for the green hills in the distance.

Away and away she sped, delighting in the free rush of the wind, the swish of her pony's hoofs through the grass and the exhilaration of the open lands.

At last she turned the horse's head—where was the station? Nothing but a rolling plain, not shining with sunlight, but dampened by shadow. With a little cry of terror she sent her mount racing ahead and strained her eyes for the engine smoke on the horizon.

"Ah, there it is—but so far away!"

She surmised what had happened—her father had reached a station farther down the line and wired for the train to join him, and they had not discovered her absence before starting.

As she looked she saw off to the left another rider—a wide-hatted ranch-

"I WANT A RIDING HORSE."

man—toward him she rode. As she drew nearer her cheeks grew red and her eyes brightened. Once she stopped and turned as if to leave him. Then he came close to her.

"Oh, Mr. Mason, what shall I do?"

Frank Mason, the handsome ranch superintendent, scarcely recognized her, bowing so slightly that it seemed to be merely the motion of his horse.

"What is the matter, madam?"

"Don't be mean"—the girl's eyes were beseeching.

"But you told me never to speak to you again—only this morning."

"Yes, I know, but you see how it is—the train has gone—it is almost evening and here I am."

"It does look serious, doesn't it? Where do they think you are?"

"They don't think. Aunty's probably gone to sleep and won't wake up until midnight—the others think I'm in my room, in papa's car."

"It is serious—and nobody's at the ranch to take care of you. I suppose they will come back to-morrow anyhow."

"To-morrow!" The girl fairly screeched the word. "We must get them now—to-night, don't you understand—now!"

"But it is 50 miles to the next telegraph station—how can the engineer get orders?"

He looked toward the train, which was disappearing in a cut between some creek bluffs a mile or two below the station.

"You see, it's New Year's day and everybody but the stable boys and station agent has gone to the county seat to a celebration. There's a dance tonight, so they won't be home—yes, it is serious."

Their horses were moving slowly toward the station, yet a long distance away. They were talking earnestly and did not notice the curious movements of a herd of cattle that had strayed from the grasslands toward the station and now, hundreds and hundreds of them, were pushing close to the two figures. The girl's bright jacket and the flashing red of the cap that topped her brown curls may have caused their exceeding interest. When a huge fellow trotted in front of her weary horse, the girl stared about her in alarm.

"Oh, Frank—Mr. Mason—look!"

The young ranchman seemed much excited. "Hurry!" he exclaimed, and urged his horse into a run. She cantered by his side, alarmed by the strange apparition of the herd, which it seemed had risen out of the sod.

The ranchman saw something else that the girl did not—a cluster of earth mounds thrown up in the level of the plain, the work of prairie dogs or some other burrowers of the plains. Before he could caution the girl, her horse stumbled, fell, staggered, went tumbling in a heap with a broken leg.

Now it was serious. The cattle, more curious than ever, scampered faster toward the object of their interest; the fallen horse plunged and snorted; the skirts of its rider held fier prisoner.

In an instant Mason was by her side, tugging at the fair burden. When she was free he found her helpless from a strained ankle, and with tenderness he lifted her in his arms and to his own saddle. Then jumping beside her he turned the nervous animal, drew his revolver and shot unerringly the

"I'M SORRY I WAS SO RUDE."

struggling beast on the ground—then away toward the station resting on the broad and dusty plain.

Arrived there, he lifted her gently to one of the benches which stood in the tiny waiting-room; he transformed it into a settee with blankets from the livery stable; he heard with pleasure her words of satisfaction.

"That pin you wear—where did you get it?" she asked, irrelevantly. "It looks like Harvard."

"It is Harvard—I graduated there."

"And you are herding cattle?"

"I am superintending a ranch—my father owns it—10,000 head."

"And you live?"

"In Chicago—my special train is at St. Louis now with my sister and mother aboard, bound here."

So this was the "cowboy" she had patronized and made fun of as he came to the train day after day to see her father. She had been amused by his assurance and had quarreled with him that very morning. Now she was at his mercy—and she found it rather pleasant.

"This is a strange beginning for the New Year," she broke out. "I wonder when the train will be back."

"I think it is a good beginning—I'm sure I don't know about that train—there is no connection with it yet."

"I'm sorry I was so rude this morning, Fr—Mr. Mason."

"Don't worry, Anna—Miss Seamans." He smiled, cautiously, at her.

"It is fine of you to care for me and protect me this way," she went on, "and I don't know how to thank you."

"Don't try. This is not the first time I have seen you—I danced with you two years ago at your cousin's ball."

"I do not remember, but you have been very good now. I shall not forget it."

"I know—but don't you think it would be a fine thing to have me take care of you all the time?"

She gave a pressure of her hand—but no more. Almost at the door was a rumble, a high note "T-o-o-t!" and the striped awning of the rear car came into view a few feet away.

"Quick—love, will you?" His words were eager, and as he lifted her in his arms once more for a journey to the train she whispered: "Yes."

Almost as soon from the opposite direction came Mr. Seamans and his foremen. He greeted the pair with smiles and laughed at the daughter's injuries when he found they were not serious.

"Stay on with us," he invited Mason. "We'll bring you back before we leave for Chicago."

"How did the train come back so soon?" asked Miss Seamans, rising from her couch. "I thought it was 50 miles to the next station!"

"Wireless telegraphy," suggested Mason.

"Shucks," said the aunt, contemptuously. "The engineer pulled it down to the creek to fill the boilers. We weren't gone half an hour."

The girl looked quickly into the laughing eyes of the young ranchman.

"I believe you knew it all the time," she exclaimed.

"I did not tell you differently," he pleaded. "You remember I was under orders."

She was not satisfied. That evening as they sat out under the striped awning on the rear paltform and watched the landscape, glistening under the winter moon, as the train sped southward, she continued: "Really, Frank, didn't you bribe the engineer to run behind the hill so it would scare me?"

But he did not answer—nor has he answered yet, though his wife propounds the question every New Year's day.

New Year's Resolves

Better to Make and Break Them Than Not to Make Them at All

SOME facetious individual has defined New Year's day as "a time when men make good resolutions in the confidence of breaking them as soon as possible." But he has much to learn to his own profit who sneers at good resolutions because some men break them. To resolve to do right does not mean necessarily that one will keep the promise, but such purpose, whether outwardly expressed or inwardly understood, is proof that the individual is conscious of abiding sin of some sort.

It is the self-righteous individual who is in danger. Good resolutions are born of repentance; and repentance when genuine is a cardinal virtue. The self-righteous fellow does not resolve to do better because his vanity tells him there is nothing wrong in his makeup. He may go along committing blunders every day and doing no end of mischief. Such a fellow is beyond redemption. Like Ephraim of old, he is joined to his idols and should be left alone.

Doubtless there are many thoughtless and some insincere good resolves made on New Year's day. Nevertheless it is a good thing that many men do begin the new year with resolves to strive after what is higher and better. It is a marked and glorified improvement upon the custom once so general but now, thank God, obsolete, of men going from house to house paying calls and guzzling wine or stronger drink until before the round was completed they were hopelessly drunken.

It is a great deal better for a man to resolve a hundred times and fail in each resolve than to go along contented with his lot of sin and shame. There is hope for a man just as long as there abides in him desire for what is better. It is well to enter into argument with one's self only after due deliberation, but a broken pledge to do right is far better than no pledge at all.

There is nothing strange in association of good resolves with the dawn of a new year. On the contrary, the occasion is one that suggests just such a general practice. The old year has ended. Its memories suggest "sins committed while conscience slept," practices that degraded the moral man, follies that brought shame and vices that weakened body and brain. But memory is not all. Body and mind tell the sensible man that such practices end in physical wreck and moral decay.

The year is new and clean. The sun, just risen, looks upon it for the first time. Men of business close up their pages for the year ended and begin new and fresh ones for the new year that has dawned. They figure out accurately their losses and their gains in the old year, subtracting one from the other.

As the merchant begins his year anew, why may not the moral nature of a man be renewed if the memories of the past year and the physical shortcomings of the present suggest the need of a striving after what is higher and better?

That the practice has been abused is no argument against its use. That some men have made good resolutions only to break them is not evidence that reform is impossible. Striving after what is right is Godlike. One may raise his standard so high as not to be able to attain it, but there is virtue in every attempt to make better one's life. Indeed one may find at the closing of a long life that he has tried but to fail, and yet his very efforts to do right will be counted to him for righteousness.

The objection is, if it can be called an objection, that men are too much influenced by special occasions for special efforts. There is no more virtue in New Year's Day than there is in All Fool's Day. It would seem foolishness to wait for any such time or season for a starting period in right living. The present is the time for action, and one day is as good as another in the sight of God, as well as of men.

But the man who has put off the day of resolves to be good until the dawn of the new year will strengthen himself and work righteousness by starting out clean with the year. He will only hurt himself by devoting too much time to resolving. What he most needs is to avoid the pitfalls and snares which formerly overcame him. He has need to change resolves into action. It is his duty to retrospect in order to know himself. Each conquest of self is added strength for future victories.

Happy indeed is that New Year's for the man who, having resolved in its dawn to do right, finds at its gloaming that he has been true to his promises.

WILLIAM ROSSER COBBE.

THERE IS HOPE FOR HIM.

Deacon Goodie—Cheer up; my man, you'll be out on the first of the year.

Jail Bird—Yes, but what can I do after being a thief and holdup man?

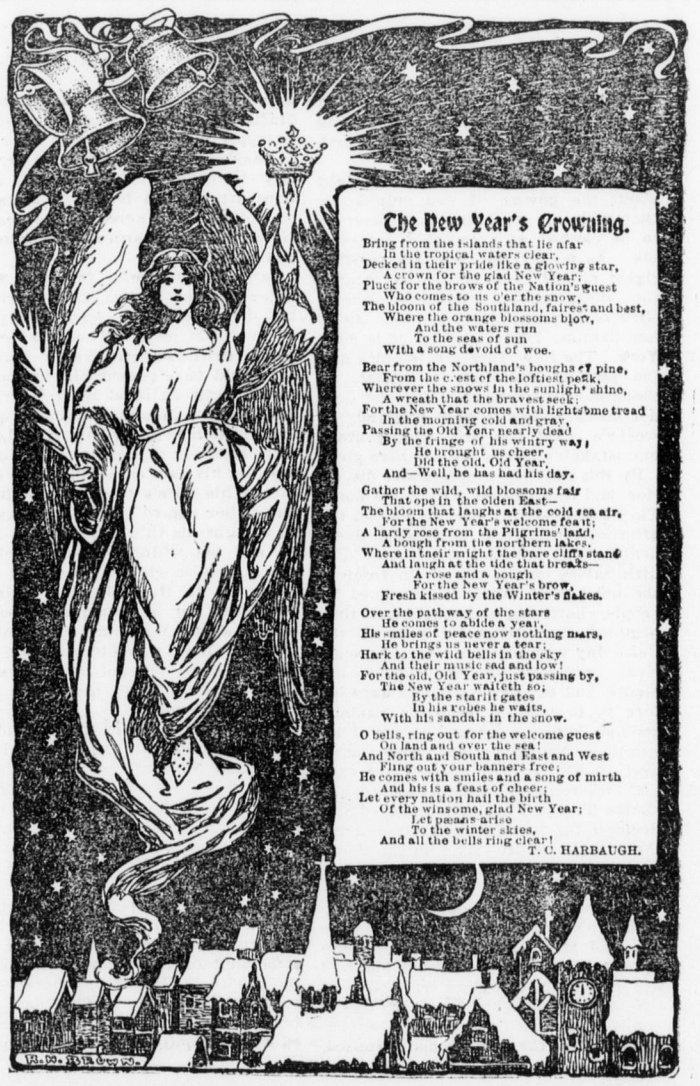
Deacon Goodie—Oh, you can go into the coal business, or start a plumbing shop.

AT 11:59 P. M.

"One kiss," he begged, "before I go."

"Well, take it; but you cannot have another one this year."

And then the clock struck the New Year.



The New Year's Crowning.

Bring from the islands that lie afar
In the tropical waters clear,
Decked in their pride like a glowing star,
A crown for the glad New Year;
Pluck for the brows of the Nation's guest
Who comes to us o'er the snow,
The bloom of the Southland, fairest and best,
Where the orange blossoms blow,
And the waters run
To the seas of sun
With a song devoid of woe.

Bear from the Northland's boughs of pine,
From the crest of the loftiest peak,
Wherever the snows in the sunlight shine,
A wreath that the bravest seek;
For the New Year comes with lightsome tread
In the morning cold and gray,
Passing the Old Year nearly dead
By the fringe of his wintry way;
He brought us cheer,
Did the old, Old Year,
And—Well, he has had his day.

Gather the wild, wild blossoms fair
That ope in the olden East—
The bloom that laughs at the cold sea air,
For the New Year's welcome feast;
A hardy rose from the Pilgrims' land,
A bough from the northern lakes,
Where in their might the bare cliffs stand
And laugh at the tide that breaks—
A rose and a bough
For the New Year's brow,
Fresh kissed by the Winter's flakes.

Over the pathway of the stars
He comes to abide a year,
His smiles of peace now nothing mars,
He brings us never a tear;
Hark to the wild bells in the sky
And their music sad and low!
For the old, Old Year, just passing by,
The New Year waiteth so;
By the starlit gates
In his robes he waits,
With his sandals in the snow.

O bells, ring out for the welcome guest
On land and over the sea!
And North and South and East and West
Fling out your banners free;
He comes with smiles and a song of mirth
And his is a feast of cheer;
Let every nation hail the birth
Of the winsome, glad New Year;
Let pæans arise
To the winter skies,
And all the bells ring clear!

T. C. HARBAUGH.