

What Will the New Year Bring!

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NANCY HILL.

CHAPTER I.

The night set in dark and chill. All day long a fine, frosty sleet had fallen, which as the wind rose in lengthened gusts, changed to fast-falling snow-flakes.
All day the note of preparation had sounded in Abraham Plum's kitchen; for it was the day before Christmas.
Mrs. Plum shoved the last quartet of pies into the oven, shut the door with a clang, and began to clear away the supper-table.

She smiled mischievously. "S'pose I'd own it if I thought I'd come off spindago?"
"That's jist like wimmin'," said Mr. Plum; "they're so queer. Own it? Yes, I'd proclaim it from Dan to Beer-sheba, and so serve as a warnin'."
His wife laughed. "All wimmin' are cut in the same pattern, I b'lieve. There's Nancy, now! I expect she'd eat her tongue sooner'n step up t'me 'n say, 'Father, Sam abuses me.'"

Twelve o'clock struck. The matrons came back from the church. The big turkey roasting in the oven began to steam fragrantly; the fat sparerib in the other began to hiss and sputter as the mistress of the feast turned it over with sprinklings of salt and pepper.
The children were made hungry by the smell and clamored loudly for dinner, and were appeased with thick cuts of gingerbread, which they went around munching—with copious crumbs—to adults' dissatisfaction.
Two o'clock struck. The long tables assumed the functions of spring, and leaved out with astonishing rapidity.
Children were thrust into an adjoining bedroom to be got out of the way, when they set up a series of agonizing choruses.
The blue-edged crockery kept ignominiously in the pantry, while fair, white china arranged itself on the board. Pickles and preserves crept side by side; "cold slaw" brimmed huge bowls; jelly quaked and quivered; hearty "brown bread" did not disdain to lie alongside of its paler relative.

CHAPTER II.

"It is Christmas day," said Nancy Hill, at breakfast. "I suppose we are going home to-day; they'll all be there."
"Let them. Where is home, I wonder, if not here?" Her husband ate his breakfast sullenly.
"Let me tell you, where I want to go," put in the wife, feebly.
"I can't help that. Am I responsible for what you say? I'm not going one step. I don't care a fig for all their meetings."
"Well, I can take the horse and go alone. I can drive, you know. And it's only eight miles away."
"I'm going to use the horse; I've got an engagement at Stanton. I shan't be back to dinner."
"You can drive me over first. I must go," pleaded the disappointed creature.
"Better will be there with her children. She has just come from Minnesota, and I haven't seen her since before I was married."

There was something in his wife's tears very inflammable to the passion of Samuel Hill. He always met them with abuse. He had been drinking now, and was more insulting than ever before.
He struck her.
She crouched frightened, beside the cradle where her boy lay sleeping. There are some natures which the sign of fear in others determines to aggression. It seemed as if with that one blow a whole rabble of evil instincts rushed out to follow after.
Even in his passion Nancy noted how handsome he was; and, through her abject fear, crept a few trembling thrills of love for him still.
Fate said, in person of her husband, "Not so." She looked bewildered at first; she did not comprehend his meaning. He made it plain to her. "Since you are so anxious to go you shall; and you need not trouble yourself to come back. I really insist upon it. I am anxious for your enjoyment."
At which his loud laugh rang out. "Not I. 'Taint a frunt season; besides, I don't like plums."
"I won't stir one step in this way; I'll call the neighbors," she declared.
"Do, if you dare."
She was too afraid to perform her threat. Then seeing she did not start, he took her by the wrists, and she found herself and baby out in the cold.
She crept under the wood-shed, and sat down on a pile of boards and cried Misery had shown her a bold front before; now it overwhelmed her. Her boy stirred in her arms, and she wrapt the shawl carefully about him.
Her husband came out presently and looked the door. Then he looked up the road and down. She shrank into a corner behind the boards; he did not see her and passed to the barn whistling. She heard him swear at the horse as he saddled it. Then he mounted and went off through the snow.
She crept out of the shadow. How to get into the house was the question. He would not be back before noon she knew. She tried the doors; they were all fastened. The windows raised with difficulty from the inside; it was a hopeless task to open them from the outside. Besides she could not put her baby on the snow to make the attempt.
His little hands were cold; he woke and cried, and she was too chilled to soothe him.
Last she thought of the dining room window. Beside it was a door opening on the piazza; a fragment of glass had fallen from one of the lower panes, and if she could thrust her hand through she might unbolt the door.
No! it was too small a fissure. Away she went to the shed again, and she found a broken barrel hoop, with which she sped back as fast as her benumbed limbs would carry her. This happened to hit the bolt; she gave a vigorous push and heard it slide. She rekindled the fire and sat down to think.
After this experience she must leave him; it was evident that he wished it. But how mortifying to go back so! Turned away by her husband with scolds and jeers!
She dressed her baby carefully; there was time enough. He should look his best at the Christmas feast, if he was the heir to an unhappy home. Then she donned her own best garments and made up a bundle to carry with her. As she busied herself thus her heart felt lighter. It seemed to her as if she had shaken off an incubus which had hitherto weighted her with iron.
"Come, baby, we must start!" she sang to the child, who cooed in return and made a dive at her bonnet with his fat fingers.
She walked along the snowy road with light footsteps until the first two miles were passed. Then she began to turn her head and wish some team would come along; she should beg a ride. But she saw none. The sky was blue overhead, the sun shone brightly. The leafless branches of the trees were freighted with soft snow which glistened in the clear sunshine. The air was crisp and cold, but still. It stung her cheeks into ruddy flame as she walked.
It was hard walking. The road was indicated only by a plow line, where hoofs had been before her. The snow covered her ankles, incrusting her stockings with considerable pieces, which she paused from time to time to pick. It was a pleasant day to those who walked or rode for pleasure. As for Nancy, the recollection of the morning clothed her spirit with darkness, dawning her whole future.
The short afternoon waned, night fell ere she reached the village. Her

father's farm lay a mile beyond. Her limbs ached with cold and fatigue; her boy cried; she had eaten nothing since morning. Her whole soul seeped poisoning itself on the wings of despair.
Always when we think our last agony is reached there glimmers a respite beyond. We cry out in our extremity and make our frantic plunge, and lo! we have waded the brook. We grope along blindly; and it is only when we calm our fainting fears to look back that we see the method which has guided us to a surer footing.
A light now became visible to the stricken wanderer. It came from her father's many windows, ray after ray, which urged on her weary feet. Distance shortened itself unaccountably. She stood before the door!
What a plight she was in! Should she spoil their sport? She looked over the snowy fields and shuddered. They were playing "blind man's buff" inside. Peel after peel of laughter came to her, cold and silent on the door-stone. She was ashamed to go in—ashamed to say that her husband had sent her so.
The door suddenly opened. Sarah's little boy looked out, and with a cry of fear slammed it to again. He thought he had seen a ghost.
How they started when she stepped inside. Old and young thronged around her, crying for sorrow at her distress and for joy at her appearance.
"I have come to spend Christmas," said Nancy, amid tears, as she sank into a chair.
"And you are heartily welcome, daughter," answered Mr. Plum, in a broken voice. "Let it be for always."
And then they all cried again—the children because their mothers wept.
"Hooray!" shouted Mr. Plum suddenly, wiping his eyes with his yellow silk handkerchief. "Mother, are those mince pies gone?"
"I hope not," answered the dame, briskly.
"Any cold turkey and things?"
"Let us all help!" was the general shout, and a rush was made for the pantry.
The long table came out again with dispatch. On it marched the array of plates and cups and saucers. And though the second dinner was cold it was complete; there was no vacant chair.
"Ah, Nancy," said Mr. Plum, when the guests had all gone and only the three sat round the stove talking, "this has been a better Christmas than the last to me, for then I did not expect to ever have you back."
The mother only looked at her.
"For me too," rejoined Nancy; "for now I know that I have a home."
"My boy will become trouble to you," she added presently, in a low voice.
Mr. Plum's smile was more elegant than words, as he reached forth his hand and rocked the cradle—the same old cradle, which had held them all, and which had been brought from the garret, late as was the hour, that her boy might miss no accustomed comfort.

FACTS FOR THE CURIOUS.

The entire loss of the German armies in 1870-75 was 53,000 men.
Cologne water was first so called in 1709, when an Italian citizen of Cologne named Johann Maria Farina prepared it. Since that time genuine eau de Cologne has been manufactured by the descendants of Farina.
A few years ago a Japanese publisher brought out a life of Washington in forty-five volumes, with illustrations in which the father of his country is represented in modern dress, wearing a heavy mustache, carrying a cane, and accompanied by a skye terrier.
When Napoleon III. went to the front in 1870 his mass of baggage looked like a traveling hospital. It included three kinds of bathtubs, a large medicine chest, an invalid's easy chair and a peculiar sort of stretcher. The emperor took several very gentle horses and had double wadded saddles, with extra padding in the back.
Thus they make new potatoes at Paris: Old potatoes, small and cheap, are taken to the banks of the Seine, put in tubs of water, and vigorously stirred and stamped upon by their owner's feet. This process makes the potatoes bright colored, smooth and satiny like, exactly like new tubers. Then they are dried, rolled in paper, and sold at the Marchés de Comestibles.
Paris, in the course of its history, has been besieged ten times. The first time in 50 B. C. and the last in 1870. It was fortified until the time of Louis XIV., who razed the defenses, as, in his day, the idea of a foreign army reaching the heart of France was laughed at. Napoleon I. did not fortify Paris, and the allies, in 1814, found only a few hastily-built redoubts in their way.
Byron wrote "The Corsair" in ten days, at the rate of 200 lines a day; Lope de Vega wrote 300 dramas in 100 days; Voltaire composed "Zaire" in three weeks and "Olympie" in six days; Dryden wrote his "Ode to St. Cecilia" at one sitting, and Mrs. Browning's "The Lady Geraldine's Courtship" was the work of twelve hours. Shakespeare, Dickens, Wordsworth and Moore, on the other hand, were slow workers. Hepworth Dixon rewrote his "Two Queens" eight times, and Kinglake's "Eothen" was rewritten five or six times.
Cardinal Antonelli was very fond of canary birds, and at one time had more than 200 of them, which had been presented to him.
The atmosphere of the Mosque of St. Sophia, Constantinople, is filled with the odor of the musk which Justinian charged the mortar when he rebuilt the church in 538 A. D.
The statistics of the French war office show that during the first half of the eighteenth century, ending five years after Fontenoy, 450,000 Irishmen died in the French service, and during the last half 150,000.
Glass tablecloths are on exhibition in New York. Their manufacturer says that they are strong and durable, and can be washed and ironed.

HUMOROUS.

Trickett says Hanian is a bad egg—because he can't be bent.—Toronto GLOBE.
A man never knows the exact length of his thumb until he jams the end of it.—Meriden Recorder.
When a man says he is armed to the teeth it is a sign that he has been getting a new plate put in.—New York Commercial.
"This is an off year," as the barber said when his razor slipped and took off a customer's auricular appendage.—Keokuk Gate City.
The effect of New York intend giving Sarah Bernhardt a reception because of her appearance in French roles.—Baltimore Every Saturday.
Pawnbrokers may be a hard-hearted set, but it must be admitted that there is one redeeming feature in their business.—Yonkers Statesman.
A returned Black Hills miner assures us that Buffalo Bill has scoured the prairies so much that they are shiner like a glass bottle.—Rockland Courier.
"How slim is Sarah Bernhardt, ps. That shadow of a shade?"
"My boy, she's just about as thin as picnic lemonade."—Cincinnati Star.
"This world is all a fleeting show," but it takes mighty lively work for some of us to keep a grip on our tickets of admission, however poor the show is.—Boston Globe.
The first duty of a sailor is to learn all the ropes. It is a remarkable fact that many of the ropes have to be taut, also, before they can be of service.—Yonkers Statesman.
Now, by Jove, we've got it! We're going to reform this theater nuisance. Announcement! A big hat makes a woman look twenty years older than she there.—Boston Post.
A Boston artist claims to have painted an orange peel on the sidewalk so naturally that six fat men slipped up on it before the deception was discovered.—Hartford Evening Post.
"A man never realizes," remarks a commercial traveler, "how plentiful mustard is, and how scarce is bread and butter until he tackles a railway refreshment-saloon sandwich."
A man says a great many things which would not look well in print, when he addresses a few cogent remarks to the party who leaves the door open at this season of the year.—Schenectady Herald.
Science is a grand thing to study, but when a man sets down in a washbub and expects to lift himself up by the handles, he has undertaken a kontrakt that science can't help him fill.—Josh Billings.
Physicians are unanimous in discouraging the practice of sitting on the pavement more than two seconds at a time. The harder the fall the shorter should be the siesta.—Rochester Democrat.
Contentment is ever so much better than riches; but somehow the stupid world never falls down and worships the contented man, nor do mamma's with marriageable daughters run after him.—Providence.
The wool clip of the world in 1878 was nearly five times as great as in 1830. The fact is not offered in proof that barbers were that much better patronized in the latter year.—Fond du Lac Reporter.
"Will, I have done a good deed today," said Billington. "What's that?" asked his friend. "I have given a poor, deserving man an overcoat," replied Billington, turning about; "how does it fit?"—Boston Journal.
Alcohol is recommended for cleaning silver. It cleans bank notes equally as well—in fact, any kind of money it cleans with a surprising alacrity. For sale by all druggists everywhere.—Danversville Sentinel.
He called in at the back office and led to sell the foreman a bottle of his wonderful lightning radiator, but the foreman told him he didn't have any lightning that he wanted eradicated, and sadly he passed out the door.—Rockland Courier.
A Mr. Hutchins, who was sent to investigate the condition of the new "Connemara Colony," in Northern Minnesota, reports fearful suffering among the colonists. He found the children almost naked and suffering from the cold. The people had no wood and were obliged to resort to hay for fuel, of which they had very little. The peasants seemed haggard and worn. Some of them said that they were better off in Ireland, where at least they had plenty of potatoes, more than in the new colony. Mr. Hutchins enumerates a large number of individual cases of suffering.
A sample of Chinese tea has been raised by Mr. S. P. Odom, of Dooly county, Ga., from plants furnished by the national agricultural department. He says the plants are now three years old, in a very healthy condition and bearing profusely. Mr. Odom is satisfied that tea raising could be made a success in this country, and of great profit, if the proper attention were given it.
The little city of Weimar, where Goethe resided, is ordinarily as quiet as a country village. Pianoforte playing, however, is universal, and the noise of persons practicing on that instrument is something intolerable. The authorities have therefore passed an ordinance that no piano shall be played in a room, the windows of which are open, under penalty of a fine.