

The Cheraw Chronicle

"Tis Not in Mortals to Command Success, but We'll do More, Sempronious, We'll Deserve it."

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It was New Year's night. An aged man was standing by the window. He mournfully raised his eyes toward the deep blue sky, where the stars were floating like white lilies on the surface of a clear, calm lake. Then he cast them on the earth, where few more helpless beings than himself were moving toward their inevitable goal—the tomb. Already he had passed sixty of the stages which lead to it, and he had brought from his journey nothing but errors and remorse. His health was destroyed, his mind unfurnished, his heart sorrowful, and his old age devoid of comfort.

The days of his youth rose up in a vision before him, and he recalled the solemn moment when his father had placed him at the entrance of two roads, one leading into a peaceful, sunny land, covered with a fertile harvest, and resounding with soft, sweet songs; while the other conducted the wanderer into a deep, dark cave, whence there was no issue, where poison flowed instead of water, and where serpents hissed and crawled.

He looked toward the sky, and cried out in his anguish: "Oh, youth, return! O my father, place me once more at the crossway of life, that I may choose the better road!" But the days of his youth had passed away, and his parents were with the departed. He saw wandering lights float over dark marshes, and then disappear. "Such," he said, "were the wasted life!" He saw a

in darkness athwart the churchyard "Behold an emblem of myself!" he exclaimed; and the sharp arrows of unavailing remorse struck him to the heart.

Then he remembered his early companions, who had entered life with him, but who having trod the paths of virtue and industry, were now happy and honored on this New Year's night. The clock in the high church tower struck, and the sound, falling on his ear, recalled the many tokens of the love of his parents for him; the prayers they had offered up in his behalf. Overwhelmed with shame and grief, he dared no longer look toward that heaven where they dwelt. His darkened eyes dropped tears, and with one despairing effort he cried aloud, "Come back, my early days! Come back!"

And his youth did return; for all this had been but a dream, visiting his slumbers on New Year's night. He was still young, his errors only were no dream. He thanked God fervently that time was still his own; that he had not yet entered the deep, dark cavern, but he was free to tread the road leading to the peaceful land where sunny harvests wave.

Ye who still linger on the threshold of life, doubting which path to choose, remember that when years shall be passed, and your feet shall stumble in the dark, you will wish you had chosen the other.



Was there any place where she could be really quiet?



Nell went to the door and looked out. As far as her eyes could see there was wintry whiteness and through the purple shadows of the coming night a hazy light like stars. Each light represented a farmhouse and each house, she thought, was a

"Oh, sit down," she said, somewhat ungraciously.

But he stood by the fireplace and looked down at her.

"What's the matter?" he asked abruptly.

"Nothing," faintly.

"Don't tell me that; I know better."

"If I tell you," she asked, "you mustn't give me any advice. I have had so much advice I hate it."

He sat down beside her. "Tell ahead," he said, "and I'll promise to listen like the Sphinx."

"You see, it is this way," she said; "my uncle in town is rich. He is a miserly old man, and he made me miserable when I lived with him. I'm not going to tell you about my childhood, how little love there was in it, and how I was starved spiritually and mentally, as well as physically. When I grew old enough to understand that he could give me things, and had not because he wanted to save and save, I left him and came here to teach; and now he has written to me to come back, and I don't want to go, yet he is sick and old and alone. I don't know what to do. He tells me to stay here, but I don't want to."



"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I don't know," she said, "but I don't want to go."

"I'll go with you," he said, "if you want me."

man, who looked upon the little woman from the city as a being from another sphere; she was so dainty, so different from the girls in his own village.

Nell knew what she was doing when she told him not to ask her to stay; she had known for a long time of the question that trembled on his lips. She knew he wanted to marry her, as a woman knows who is wise in the ways of men.

She thought of the life she might lead if she married him, a life in the big farmhouse, sunshine in summer and secure in winter. Then she thought of her life with her uncle in a dark apartment in the streets of the city. She knew that, in a way, it was a false idea of duty that would take her back. Yet she had to go, some force that was in her seemed impelling her.

The wind blew in great blasts against the little house, the snow had drifted up to the window sills, and white lines of it pointed across the window pane like ghostly fingers. Drizzling footsteps came on the path. Nell listened. It was not Jack Norton, these were the steps of the old man, and the door was unlocked.

"Come in," she called, "the door is open."

The old man went on, when she had made him sit down.

"Are you going back with me?"

Now that she was face to face with his meanness, it seemed to Nell that she could never go with him.

"I don't know," she faltered.

"Here's a grateful girl," the old man stormed, and just then the sleighbells jingled and, in another moment Jack Norton was in the room, his arms full of bundles, his eyes beaming.

"So this is your uncle," he said. "I thought so when I directed him here. You'll stay and have supper with us, won't you, sir? We are going to see the old year out and the new year in."

"Who are you?" the old man growled.

"I?" Jack's eyes flashed from Nell's cowering figure to the grimness of the uncle. Then suddenly he took things in his own hands.

"I'm the man your niece is going to marry," he said.

"What!" the old man shouted.

"I'm the man your niece is going to marry," he said securely. He had seen the joy in Nell's face.

"But she is going home with me." Jack shook his head. "No, she is going home with me. You can come whenever you wish, sir. The old house is big enough for twenty uncles, or if you like it better, there is a cottage at the edge of the farm where you could stay if you wished."

The old man flashed a crafty glance at him. "Would it cost me anything?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Jack.

"Then marry her," said the old uncle, "and I'll come and live in the cottage alone."

Nell's face was in her hands, and, as Jack bent over her, she whispered, "Oh, I can't let you do it!"

"It is the only way that you can make my New Year happy," he told her, and as she looked up into his face, she knew that what he said was true.

Mistress—I must say, Mary Ann, I find you very hard to get along with. The Cook—I was about to say the name of you, mum.



"I'm the Man She is Going to Marry."



If New Year's comes as late again
This year as it did last,
I don't believe I'll get to see
The end, when it goes past,
And when the new one starts to go
Across the calendar,
Last time I watched until I dreamed
I was a New Year's star.

Pa says there isn't anything
That folks can see or hear
When midnight comes and Father
Time

Brings in another year.
But maybe he is fooling me.
Why do the people sing
And call it watch-night meeting, and
Why do the church bells ring?

Pa says they got the number of
The year by adding one
Each New Year's to the year before,
And when that year was done,
By adding on another, till

They piled it up to here.
It must have taken awful long
To count just once a year.

They tell me when I go to bed
The last December night,
I'll have to go without a meal
Until the next year's light.
Some people think they're awfully
smart,

But I know what they mean;
The next year has to be next day—
There's nothing in between.

A New Year's day's a happy time
For almost every one
It seems a sort of start of things,
With nothing quite begun,
And everybody's feeling young
And spry, just like a boy.
I hope your happy New Year will
Be spilling-full of joy.

TOMMY.

The Snow Began to Fall.

where she might be alone. On the crest of a hill, far up the road, stood the schoolhouse where she taught. It was closed now and dark.

"I will go there," Nell said to herself, and just then a voice behind her called: "Supper is ready."

"I don't want any," Nell said wearily. "I'm going out for a little while, Mrs. McGregor. I'll be back by ten."

The snow began to fall softly as she left the house, and by the time she reached the school it was beginning to drift against the fences. There was no fire within, but Nell lighted one, and when the warmth began to steal into the room, she drew the one big chair close to the hearth and in the peaceful loneliness gave herself up to her thoughts.

But she was not to remain in peace long. There was a sound of sleighbells without, heavy steps on the threshold, and she looked up to see the burly form of a young farmer in the doorway.

"Well, well," he said, "I saw the light and came in. Who would have dreamed that you would be here alone?"

Nell smiled wearily. "I came to be quiet."

"Then you don't want me."

checked himself.

"I'd like to break that promise," he said.

"No, you mustn't," she said firmly. "You've all been so good to me here, and if you," she caught her breath, "join the others in asking me to stay, it will make it so hard for me to go."

"He doesn't deserve much at your hands," the man stated.

"I know," she said wearily, "but to-morrow I begin a new year. I don't want to begin it wrong; yet I don't know the right."

"I don't believe much in saying things," the young farmer remarked; "my policy is to do them. And now, are you going to stay here in this lonely place much longer? It is snowing and it is late."

"I suppose I ought to go," she said doubtfully, "but it is so lovely here in the silence."

"Look here," he said suddenly, "don't you keep your tea things in that little cupboard? I have got to go to town, and when I come back I'll bring something for a little supper, and we can watch the old year out. Then I'll take you home in the sleigh."

"How good of you." She held out her hand to him. "You haven't bothered me with advice, and you are doing something to make me comfortable. That is just like you, Jack Norton."

He blushed a little, this big kindly

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Optimism turns up the corners of my mouth, and incidentally the other fellow's. But I won't carry it to a Nirvana state of inactivity. The world must move, I know.

A smile will carry me more successfully through the coming year than a frown. Besides, it's more becoming.

My husband is not a hero to the other woman. She thinks her partner is just as good. I will give her a chance to sound his praises.

I will not shake the other girl's false hair in the man's face. If it is a good match, he will not believe me; and if it is an obvious substit-

tion, he will think that I am catty. In either case I lose.

"Truth is a moon reflected in many waters," says an eastern proverb. I will remember that when questioning my erring child.

"Union and liberty, one and inseparable, now and forever," is a pretty good motto for married ones. The trouble is that liberty drifts into insignificance, and union ends at the divorce courts. I will be wise.

Despite the fact that love makes the world go round, he cannot pay the gas bill or the rent. I will look out for the bread and cheese and love will provide the kisses.

