

CANADIAN HOSPITAL NEWS

VOL. III

DECEMBER 30, 1916

No. II

The Old Year.

IN that delicious hour, when darkness has swallowed the sunlight, and the dancing flames in the grate cast a weird glow over everything in the room, silhouetting one's figure hugely upon the hangings, the pictures, and the walls; in that musing hour we were wondering just what we might venture to inflict upon you, our readers of the *Canadian Hospital News*, this last issue of Nine-teen-Sixteen, when we felt a gentle touch upon our cheek. Oh! but it was indeed a feeble touch, very like the breathing of the soft summer zephyr, and a very gentle voice whispered in our ear:—

"You were dreaming," said the voice.

We started, half rose, and turned to find at our side a very old man, bent and trembling.

"You are ill," we said, "pray take this chair."

"No, my friend, I must not tarry," whispered the old gentleman in shaky tones. "'Tis true, I am exhausted, for I am very old, and have but a few hours to live. I have come to ask you to express to the dear Canadian Soldier Boys my thanks and benediction. They have done great things for me. I am the Old Year."

"But, Old Year," we ventured, "why so sad?"

"There has been nothing very joyous in my journey," he answered, with a sigh. "In my ears has ever been the din of the world conflict; before my eyes have passed pictures of suffering, too harrowing for description; through all the suffering and the sorrow I have listened to the jingling of the profiteers' gold; I have looked upon the purple and fine linen of his family, who fare sumptuously every day; I have had to endure the painful procrastination of the politicians. Is there any cause for gladness?"

"But surely, Old Year," we protested, "some things must have gladdened your heart."

He hung his head for a moment, and then glanced up with a brighter light in his eye:—

"Yes," said he, slowly. "Your soldiers have given me any joy I may have experienced. The brave fellows who have bled and died in a righteous cause—words cannot express all I owe to them. Their sacrifice will not be in vain."

"Can you tell us, Old Year, when all this horror will end, and Peace come again?" we questioned.

"Ah, that I cannot say," groaned the old man. "In a few hours I shall have gone. I die, and my name will become a sad, sad