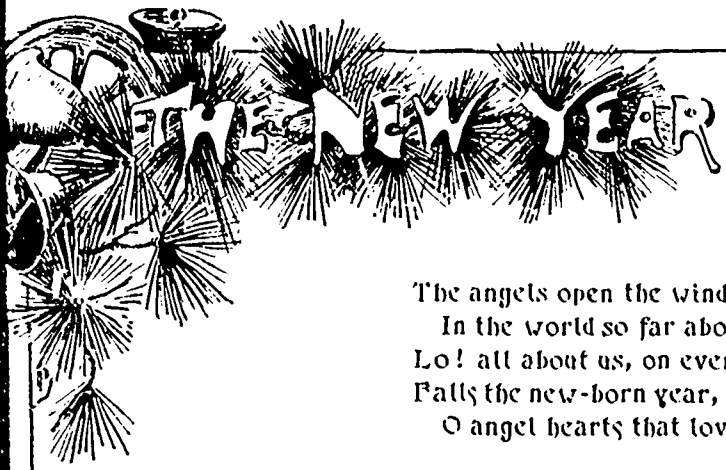




The angels open the windows wide
In the world so far above us;
Lo! all about us, on every side,
Falls the new-born year, unstained, untried,
O angel hearts that love us!

We take our yesterdays, dim and old,
Touched with sorrow and sinning;
We give to us with a grace untold
The year's soft dew, and the dawn of gold;
We give us the fresh beginning.

Untried, the New Year falls at our feet
From the world so far above us,
And what it will bring of joy complete,
Or take of treasure, tender and sweet,
We know, O hearts that love us!

JEAN BLEWETT.

JUST YOU AND I.

I remember a girl friend of mine sending me a bit of rhyme—a poem, we considered it—entitled, "Maiden Musings," or something equally alliterative and sentimental. It began in this fashion:

Eighteen years of age to-day,
O, how have I spent my time?
Alas! too much in pleasure gay,
Too little in ———

I really forget in what essential my schoolmate reckoned herself lacking; some solemn virtue, I suppose. There were eight or ten stanzas, in each of which the first line was repeated, while the remaining three were filled with bewailments over past sins and heroic resolutions for the future.

The verse-making did not impress me much, as I knew something of the trick of rhyming. But the solemn retrospect and lofty resolutions inclined me to view my friend with great respect and admiration, especially since I was a year her junior, and an altogether sturdy and straightforward young person, who must have been remarkably trying to people possessing either sentiment or nerves.

Memory plays us many an odd trick by giving permanent lodgment to some such absurdity, and refusing house-room to valuable material.

We can afford to laugh at such sentimental heroics from young eighteen. Yet we are all given to retrospect at seasons, and perhaps especially at the close and opening of the years. The business man "takes stock" and discovers his exact financial standing; and there are few save the most indifferent who do not indulge unconsciously in a little individual stock-taking as one year drops behind the infinite curtain and another steps into its place. We reckon the changes that have come into our lives since the opening days; we marshal the circle of months before us, and review what they have given us of perplexity or ease, of pain or pleasure.

In this month we stood beside a bier, where a fair young life vanished from our circle of intimates forever. In this we met business perplexity and a blocking of the path. Here we fought bodily pain, and here our days were shadowed by sympathy with the trouble of one we love. In this month we met prosperity, and in this we found a friend whose advent shall make our life fuller through all time.

What has it all amounted to? Are we poorer or richer than we were when last the midnight bells rang out the solemn counting of the years?

Sometimes we leave the Old Year with reluctance; whatever ill it may have brought, at least we have known and tried it, it has nothing worse in store.

But this New Year, with all its waiting months, we meet at first half fearfully. Yet as the face of its predecessor fades away, we turn to greet it, if not joyously, at least with hope, and presently we have forgotten all the past and are ringing happy salutations to the days that are to come and the events that may be.

All that remains to us of the year that has gone—all that should remain—is the wisdom that it has brought us, and a tender, bright strain that permeates our lives unconsciously, as the fragments of Sunday hymns permeate the bright crisp atmosphere of Monday morning.

There is a time to remember, and a time to forget. The tendency of this last decade of the century is toward the former. Analysis, introspection, criticism, pessimism—all these characteristics of the age—have their foundations in memory, are rather in re-remembering.

It seems to me that the great need of our time is to learn how to forget. To begin not merely each year, but each month and each day of it, with faces resolutely turned away from that which has preceded, whether it were failure or success; to simply and absolutely forget the things which are behind, and be conscious only of the things which may be: this is surely the secret of true progress.

It is the secret of gladness, too,—to think of the "may be's" rather than the "might-have-beens." There would be less of morbid literature in the world, less of crime and insanity, also, if people would remember less and hope more.

So it seems that the significance of the New Year lies in this, that we place a definite barrier between the past and the future. Behind us lies our individual successes and failures, before us stretches out a vast range of possibilities, and none can make us failures therein, except ourselves.

We speak much these days of heredity, environment, and education, as factors in determining our lives. That these affect and modify our development none dispute; yet every one of us are only aware that whatever these may do from a human standpoint towards barring our way to success, from the spiritual or divine standpoint, nothing but our own voluntary self-determining actions can make us failures.

"It takes a great deal of grace to be willing to become a failure," a friend said to me recently. He was speaking of material measurements and standards.

I am not sure that it is intended that we should be thus willing. One cannot conceive of natural, healthy manhood or womanhood being willing to

become failures even in a material sense. They may accept it without bitterness after honest effort; but to be willing in anticipation augurs either a higher state of grace or a lower state of health than is desirable. But from a spiritual standpoint we cannot be failures if we will not.

A woman,
Poor or rich, despised or honored,
Is a human soul. And what
Her soul is, that she is herself.

So Mrs. Browning writes. Failure in the world's eyes may mean the highest success, while material success may mean the most abject failure.

These are trite sentiments; yet there are times when they need to be uttered. Our New Year will be none the less full of ambitions, of perplexities, of griefs even; but it will hold a stronger and nobler resolve, and a deeper peace, if we but realize that it is ours alone to make our life a failure or success.

And whether the past be stained or pure, one of material poverty or prosperity, of fulfilment or frustration; whether we be in youth or prime or sunset years, —yet, while the New Year is ours, for a month, a day, an hour even, we have time so to live that unseen spirits shall say: "He has won."

FATH FENTON.

The Virgil Practice Clavier, an instrument containing a piano key board having no tone but producing clicks instead when the proper touch is applied, is a comparatively recent help in the study of music.

Mr. Anthony Stankowitch, piano virtuoso, of New York, recently gave a lecture before the pupils of the Toronto Conservatory of Music, explaining the benefits claimed to be derived from practice upon the clavier. It is a great aid in developing those muscles whose strength is a positive necessity to success as an executant. It is also a decided help in memorizing; for, the clicks all having the same sound, the eye has to be particularly acute in discerning whether the right keys are played, and this promotes care and concentration. When conscientiously used it is claimed that results can be obtained in three months equal to those accomplished in three years in the ordinary way. This may be an exaggeration, but certainly it is a help in developing an accurate pianistic technique. Of course, in piano playing, mechanism is one thing and a musical emotional tone having richness and beauty quite another, and this latter quality cannot be acquired by the use of any instrument having solely for its object mechanical dexterity.

I hear that Miss Morgan, a daughter of Judge Morgan, of Toronto, who for the past two years has been studying in Paris, will probably make her debut in grand opera some time this season. Those of us who have so often been charmed with the rich quality of her lovely voice look forward with confidence to a most successful career for her.

December seems to have been particularly favored in the way of art exhibitions. James Bain's gallery was one of the most interesting, for, besides showing work by our local and Canadian artists, fine specimens of Dutch, French and British art is to be seen. L. R. O'Brien shows many soft, delicate effects of light and shade. Homer Watson, in quite a different style, shows strength, if not so much beauty. Mr. Smith, of St. Thomas, has some striking little marine views there with bright touches in shadow and sail that make them rather after the Italian style. Mr. Bain shows some of T. B. Hardy's (R. W.S.) marine views, "The Wreck" being especially beautiful. A. H. Burr, R. L. G. Pelouse and many others have exhibits such as one seldom has the pleasure of viewing.