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Poetry.

A NEW YEAR'S PETITION.

Rom. xii. 1, 2; Ha. ex. 133; Ps. lxxviii. 11, 13.
Oh! that my eyes might close,
That deafness might descend,
That I might never hear,
That I might never see,
That I might never know,
That I might never feel,
That I might never think,
That I might never live,
That I might never die,
That I might never be,
That I might never have,
That I might never do,
That I might never be,
That I might never have,<
That I might never do,
That I might never be,
That I might never have,<
That I might never do,<

LIFE'S SUNDRIES.

Life is our school-time, each new year
Masks a new page, a lesson—learned,
Too oft before the book is turned,
That wilful indolence would slur.
The Master's rod is ever near,
By our unheeding hands earned,
While for mere childish toys concerned,
Which we to wisdom's path prefer,
May we this year more earnest be
To pass the final scrutiny,
And to secure a good degree!
While Wisdom's halls may we arise,
In lawful contest take the prize,
And win our diploma for the skies!

W. LANGFORD.

AUNT SALLY'S NEW YEAR'S GIFTS.

ALY KEPT NEW YEAR'S AND PACKS UP HER GIFTS.

New Year's Day was close at hand, and Aunt Sally had shut herself up in her room every morning after breakfast longer than usual. What could she be doing? Mr. Crass was not a man to be deterred by any nice considerations of propriety from satisfying his curiosity, especially where he considered his pecuniary interests were concerned; and so, being the mean fellow (have described him, he ventured to bore a small hole through the door, and then stooped to peep through it. He might have walked into the room for all that Aunt Sally cared; and she liked to take her own course in these things; and now she was merely drawing a few cheques and placing them in envelopes arranged upon the table and numbered from 1 to 5.

Mr. John Crass was delighted with what he saw, and to Johanna so, adding, "Generous old creature! My dear, it must be our duty to direct her benevolence into proper channels, my love—love?" The nod which Mrs. Crass gave in reply would have indicated a simple negative had it not been for the smile and wink and the snuffle which accompanied it. Depend upon it, Aunt Sally's relative was not mischievous.

The Crasses never made much of New Year's Day. They were of those who thought it no better to pass any other day in the year, and never set it apart for any of the good and merry frolics which from time out of mind have been held to belong to it. No old grudge was forgiven, no old love renewed, no unselfishness admitted within their homes on New Year's Day; but Mr. Crass usually employed in looking over his list of debtors and arising little schemes of annoyance for the delinquent ones. Aunt Sally, to their great vexation, had refused an invitation to dine with them, and had arranged to pay a cheque and attend in Lottery place, so that Lucy did not spend the day with her in the country. Could they refuse any request that would be a pleasure to dear Aunt Sally? especially when they had to dine with her at the house?

How they could not; therefore Lucy, Sally, and George found themselves in the parlour of a grocer's shop, in the Crackleton, whilst the shop itself was full of customers—the stock being low, and the temptation—(that Widow Norton and her husband had enough to do to serve them, as New Year's Eve, and neighbors did not wait, as there was no lack of subscribers, about former New Year's Eve, who had helped to make them a halting place on the road of life. The shop was cleared at last, and George assisted (well he would be his uncle in size) to put up the shutters; and

then, despite the long day's work, the merry party in Crackleton was in the grocer's little back parlor.

Aunt Sally had never passed such a New Year's Eve. Can you doubt that she had contributed largely to its happiness? The day which succeeded was bright and frosty; the old church, from the porch to the altar, was a bower of greenery; and the day might have been passing in Australian heat, to see how the church-goers would sit in groups on their way; although some of the children tried to bury their ears in their worsted comforters, and were too cold to use their pocket-handkerchiefs, still bearing up bravely, and wondering why their parents could loiter so, knowing that the roast beef or the roast goose and the plum-pudding were nearly ready at home.

Aunt Sally and her party were as happy as any of them over their New Year's dinner, and only one uncharitable speech was made throughout the day, and that was by the old lady herself.

"I wouldn't have eaten my New Year's dinner in Lottery-place for half the Bank of Australia. I couldn't have done it for the life of me, and that's a fact."

A chorus of "Bravo! bravo!" was sung by the whole party in admiring time. But we must back to town by the first train in the morning, for Aunt Sally had to pack her two large trunks and lock them securely, and write her name in a bold round hand on the labels attached to them, having to receive her guests at the Bedford at the mechanical hour of two o'clock on Boxing Day.

The whole party were very punctual and more numerous than Mr. John Crass and Johanna his wife expected. They had arrived the first, and were somewhat puzzled when Mr. Buckminster was announced. He was a portly gentleman, and evidently a new acquaintance of Aunt Sally. Mr. Gregory came next, smiling like the sun which tried in vain to put him out of countenance as he marched boldly up to Sally, and placing a packet in her hand, said, "There it is, my dear Madam, and most happy am I to be the humble means of giving you."

Aunt Sally went to the window, opened the large envelope, satisfied herself of its contents, like a good woman of business, and then held out her hand to Mr. Gregory, saying, "Mr. Gregory, I am very much obliged to you—very!"

John Crass and Johanna his wife did not half like that.

Mr. Grayfoot and Mr. Martingale, both men of substance evidently and well known on the Corn Exchange, were duly announced. "Mr. and Mrs. Wrangle" made John stare at Johanna with surprise, and actually blanched them both to an old parchment complexion when those snapping turtles entered the room arm-in-arm together. They warmly shook hands with Aunt Sally, and then passed on to John Crass and Johanna his wife, saying,

"Weak! weak!—we know we are weak, but we are only human."

George waters considered himself nobly, had come in unannounced, and been placed on her right hand by Aunt Sally, who did the honors of the table in a way that showed she had always a liberal hand and had been accustomed to carve for people with good appetites.

At the proper and appointed time, Aunt Sally rose on her legs, as the phrase goes. I know what horrible inflictions after dinner speeches usually are, how many a man owes chronic dyspepsia to listening to such disturbing influences immediately after a good meal; nevertheless, as the whole gist of this New Year's story is contained in Aunt Sally's, I must beg "silence for the chair."

"My good friends and relatives," she began, "I have no doubt that some of you were rather surprised to be asked here to take your dinner, and came like good-natured people because you thought me an oddity, and wondered what I should do. You'll perhaps be surprised more when I tell you that I am about to realize the most ardent wishes of four people's lives, three of them are now at rest in a far-off Australian forest, and I, a woman, have come from there also to perform an act of duty—or love to the memories of them that are dead. More than forty years ago my father, in his desire to do his best for his wife and children, made an error of judgement and became a ruined man—ruined in more ways than in pocket, for many who had shared his prosperity not only turned their backs on him in his poverty but called his misfortunes 'leguery,' and him a 'rogue.' He could never have held up his head again in the Old World, so, like a brave-hearted man as he was, he looked over the thousand miles of water, which was between him and the New World, and he resolved to get there if he could, and in the depths of the forests he had heard of, how himself a home for his wife and children,

and, if God prospered his labors and his thrift, my back the honest name flched from him. One friend was found to help him, and I would be set here to-day that I might tell him how often his name was heard in the prayers of the backwoodman's family, even to the day I turned me away from the place which I loved, and which will know me no more. God prospered my father in his labor, now and then checking our greediness by droughts and bush fires, but always heaping up the measure of his mercies until it ran over. At last my father died, and she who had followed him to the wilderness could not stay behind when he had gone on to heaven, and my brother and I myself were left together. My father's creditors were three rich men, who were not harder than they should have been; and I have the sons here to-day to tell them how often their debts have been paid through years of toil, and by the substantial purchase-money of four willing bondsmen in the lonely clearing, and which I am here to pay."

So saying, Aunt Sally handed to Mr. Grayfoot and Mr. Martingale and Mr. Buckminster each one of the envelopes John Crass had seen through the hole in the door.

"You will now there, gentlemen," continued Aunt Sally, a cheque for the sum my father owed your fathers, with compound interest, added up correctly, I believe; for I have given much time and care to the calculation. Don't thank me; they are New Year's gifts, which are your due. The sum total is set down under this envelope (and Sally presented one to Mr. Gregory), and amounts, my good friend,

"Twenty thousand four hundred pounds!" exclaimed Gregory, starting up. "Why you've not enough left to buy—"

"A small annuity," said Aunt Sally. "O yes, I have, and something more. Do you wish to renew a conversation we had once in your office?"

"No, Madam," replied Gregory; most emphatically no, madam. I thought you a sensible careful woman."

"But not a woman of business," added Sally. "I am not wrong then, in supposing you consider that note an answer to your interesting communication?"

"Play spare me any further mortification, and consider the service I have rendered Mr. Waters an equivalent for my annoyance I may have occasioned you. I accept my New Year's gift with thankfulness."

And Mr. Gregory rose, shook hands with Aunt Sally, and left the room, muttering "what an escape I have had!"

The service he had rendered George was contained in the packet presented to Aunt Sally before dinner. "Was George's election to the situation he had named in his first interview with Aunt Sally, and which enabled him, before three years had passed to marry his loving pupil Lucy."

John Crass and Johanna Crass, said Aunt Sally, her whole manner and tone changed, "I came to England to pay you a kindness, and to love and honor. You are all that I have known to be of my own blood, and I find you mean, cruel and dishonest."

"Hail! hail!" said John Crass, "I don't understand all this. If I guess right, you have been long enough to pay away all you are worth, and only left yourself with an annuity."

"Quite true," answered Sally. "What else?"

"My, this," said John, "that I ain't satisfied with that under-taking I hold of you, and I shall cum-on my attorney."

"You had better open this envelope first and see what you have for a New Year's gift."

John tore open the envelope presented to him by Sally and read what follows—

"John Crass—your wife gave a writing to me to use as I thought fit. In it I found an old toise-bell snuff box [That was in my tin dressing-case, thought John, belonging to my grandmother. I opened it and found the bill, of course. Johanna, you're a fool, thought John, which you can have on returning my memorandum, as I am a woman of business."

Are you satisfied with your New Year's gift?" asked Sally.

"Quite," and I thank you to take away your trunk."

"They are already in this hotel," said Sally calmly.

"Are they? Very well; then I shall take myself off," said John, preparing to be as good as his word, utterly forgetful of Johanna.

Mr. Wrangles rose with great dignity, and said, "Stay, Crass, and hear your victim."

"First hear me Mrs. Crass, you deceitful pythonesse!" exclaimed Mr. Wrangles.

But, as the parties addressed were no strangers to the pertinacity of their ill-used friends, John Crass and Johanna his

wife left the room, to the great relief of the rest of the party.

Aunt Sally still lives with the widow Norton in the little village of Crackleton, and her annuity—not a large one, I believe—is known to benefit many beside herself; and George and Lucy come at New Year's (and at other times also) to make merry in the little parlor, and once during their visit always ask this question, "Oh! Aunt Sally, don't you remember your New Year's gifts?"

Ostrich Farming.

The cultivation of the ostrich for its feathers is becoming quite an important industry in Algeria and also at the Cape of Good Hope. A well conducted ostrich farm requires plenty of space, proper pasturage, water, and shelter for the birds in stormy weather. The principal food given to the young is lucern, with tithes and tender herbs, and grasses indigenous to the country. Old birds are fed on more matured shrubs and plants, the leaves of which they strip off with their beaks, and also on Indian corn. A healthy bird a week old is worth \$50; at three months it is worth \$75; and at six months or more, \$150. Feathers are plucked from the ostrich when a year old, and each year's crop is worth about \$25. At five years, the breeder begins to pair his birds, each yielding from eighteen to twenty-five eggs in a season. An ostrich chick is about the size of a small barnyard fowl, and begins to pick up food as soon as hatched. In spite of its bad reputation, the ostrich is found to be an exemplary parent, both the cock and hen sitting on the eggs, turn about. It is said that, when a full of eggs, he has been laid, the old bird invariably pace one or two of them outside the nest, to be reserved as food for the chicks when hatched. They are thus frequently given a fair start in life, in a state of nature, miles away from a blade of grass or other food. In confinement, it has been found necessary to make such provisions for the chicks, as they thrive excellently well on tender herbs. The young ostriches are generally tame, and to a certain extent tractable; but as they grow old they are apt to evince a sourness of temper anything but agreeable to those who have them in charge. As they are liable to sudden fits of jealousy, resulting in furious conflicts, the old birds have to be kept in separate paddocks surrounded by wire fencing.

As the feathers are picked they are sorted according to their quality and purity of color. The pure whites from the wings are called bloods; the next quality, prime white; after which comes first, second, and so on. The tail feathers are less valuable. Bloods are rated at from \$200 to \$250 a pound in the whole sale market. The lowest grades fetch less than \$1 a pound. The quality of the feathers produced by tame birds is fully equal to the best collected from wild birds, and the general average is much higher. Notwithstanding the losses and disappointments incident to a new and largely experimental enterprise, ostrich farming has been found an agreeable and profitable industry.

The biggest snake story we have seen in a long while, appeared in a Kentucky paper. A short time ago one Mr. Ives discovered a large cave in the side of a hill, and heard the squealing of pigs inside. In attempting to ascertain the cause, he saw a pig trading from the mouth of the cave an immense rattlesnake with a pig in its mouth. Neighbors were summoned with various weapons, a fire was built in the mouth of the cave, and in about an hour the reptiles came pouring out. They were fired upon from the rock above, until 310 were killed, but many made their escape. The largest was ten feet long.

Cork leather is a new substance, so prepared that when bent double it neither cracks nor breaks. Boots and shoes are made of this material, but the best use to which it can be put seems to be for military accoutrements and tent cloths. The French War-office has ordered a soldier's complete outfit to be made of cork leather.

NAPOLEON'S HAPPIEST DAY.—When Napoleon was in the height of his prosperity, and surrounded by a brilliant company of the marshals and courtiers of the empire, he was asked what day he considered to have been the happiest of his life. When all expected that he would name the occasion of some glorious victory, or some great political triumph, some unglorious celebration, or other signal recognition of his genius and power, he answered, without a moment's hesitation, "The happiest day of my life was the day of my communion." At a reply so unimpassioned there was a general silence; when he added, as if to himself, I was then an innocent child."

Sunlight at Last.

Why did this woman live? Had life one charm for her? Perhaps she asked herself these questions as she sat with her face in her hands and looked out upon the cold, cheerless day. There were no tears in her great black eyes—only such a look of woe and despair that the world should have been there to see it and to have it painted on their hearts.

"Mother!"

A little wasted form on the wretched bed—a bony hand on the ragged quilt—a voice which told of hunger, and pain, and weary waiting.

She bent over him, and for a moment a mother's love shone in her eyes, and her wrinkles, and rested on her pale face with such tenderness as only a mother has.

"Lift me up and let me see the sunshine," he whispered, trying to put his arms around her neck.

"There is no sunshine," she whispered in reply, a sob in her throat.

"Kiss me, mother, and call me when the sunlight comes again," he said.

She knew he had been dying for a week—sinking slowly and surely into eternity but she had no friends to call in—she could only weep, over him and pray God that she might soon follow. With a gasp and a sob she pressed her lips to his forehead, then turned away to struggle with her despair and her great sorrow.

The cloudy cheerless day faded into dusk. She roused herself for a moment and peered through the gloom to see if her boy still slept, and then she whispered with her thoughts again. And such thoughts!

When the darkness covered the large floor as with a mantle, and when she could no longer see her own poverty, the boy suddenly cried out:

"Mother! mother! The sunlight has come!"

"Not yet, dear Ned; it is night now."

"But I see the sun—it lights all the room—it blazes into my face," he called.

"There is no sun—it is cold and dark!" she sobbed.

"And it grows brighter! and I hear sweet music! and I see little Tommy!" he whispered while through the darkness he saw his white face grow radiant.

"You are dreaming!" she sobbed.

"It is such a bright sun! The music is so sweet!" he whispered, clasping her hand.

"It is dark—it is night! she gasped, but he did not hear.

The sunlight had truly come, but it was the sunlight—the golden rays reflected from the gates of heaven—and not the sunlight of earth. The mysterious curtain hiding the valley of death had lifted for his spirit to pass under, and woe had been left behind.

Arouse her! Ask the shadows of night—and the river. When they found his body she was not there. They could not find her. If she is dead God did not judge her harshly.

Punctuality in all things.

It is astonishing how many people there are who neglect punctuality. Thousands have failed in life from this cause alone. It is not only a serious vice in itself, but it is the fruitful parent of numerous other vices, so that he who becomes the victim of it gets involved in tangle from which it is almost impossible to escape. It makes the merchant wasteful of time; it saps the lawyer, and it injures the prospects of mechanics who might otherwise rise to fortune: in a word, there is not a profession nor a station in life, which is not liable to the canker of this destructive habit.

In mercantile affairs, punctuality is as important as in military. Many are the casualties in which the neglect to renew an insurance punctually has led to a serious loss. Hundreds of city merchants are now suffering in consequence of the want of punctuality among their Western customers in paying up accounts. With sound policy on the bank-bank, under the penalty of a protest, on the punctual payment of notes; for were they to do otherwise, commercial transactions would fall into inextricable confusion. Many and many a time has the failure of one man to meet his obligations brought on the ruin of a score of others, just as the toppling down, in a line of bricks, of the master brick causes the fall of all the rest.

Perhaps there is no class of men more punctual than mechanics. Do you want an upholsterer? He rarely comes when you want him. He waits till you are all ready, and then he comes. Tailors and shoemakers often do not have their articles home in time. The consequence is that thousands remain poor all their lives, who if they were more faithful to their word, would secure a large run of custom, and so make their fortune.