

A SONG FOR THE NEW YEAR.

Hark! The Old Year is gone!
And the young New Year is coming!
Through minutes, and days, and unknown skies,
My soul on her forward journey flies;
Over the regions of rain and snow:
And beyond where the wild March-trumpets blow;
And I see the meadows, all cowslip-strewn,
And I dream of the dove in the greenwood lone,
And the wild bees humming,—
And all because the New Year is coming!

The Winter is cold, the Winter is gray,
But he hath not a sound on his tongue to-day:
The son of the stormy Autumn, he
Totters about on a palsied knee,
With a frozen heart and a feeble hand;
Let us pluck a barrel and drink him dead!
The fresh New Year is almost here;
Let us warn him with mistletoe boughs, my dear!
Let us welcome him hither, with songs and wine,
Who holdeth such joys in his arms divine!
What is the Past, to you, or me
But a thing that was, and was to be?
And now it is gone to a world unknown,
Its deeds are done, its flight is flown!

Hark to the Past! In a bitter tone
Heareth "The good Old Year is down,"
The sire of a thousand thoughtful hours,
Of a thousand songs, of a thousand flowers!
Ah! why, thou, ungrateful child of rhyme,
Halt at thou at the death of our Father Time?
Hath he not fed thee, day by day,
With fancies that soothe thy soul away?
Hath he not wakened thy slumbering pain,
The Muse that sleep in thy teeming brain?
Hath he not said I dost thou forget
All the amount of the mighty debt?

Hush, hush! The little I owe to Time
I'll pay him, some day, with a moody rhyme—
Full of phantasmas, dark and drear,
As the shadows thrown down by the old, Old Year:
Dim as the echoes that lately fell
From the deep Night's lustrous bell,
Sounding hollow o'er hill and vale,
Like the close of a mournful tale!
In the meantime—speak, tramp and drum!
The Year is gone! the Year is come!
The fresh New Year, the bright New Year,
That telleth of hope and joy, my dear!
Let us model our spirit to chance and change,
Let us lesson our spirit to hope, and range,
Through pleasures to come, through years unknown,
But never forget the time that's flown!

BARRY CORNWALL.

HOW I BECAME MR. ASHBURTON'S FOURTH WIFE.

BY EMMA.

"I'll never marry a widower," "not a man without money," "nor a poor country curate," "nor a homely man," "nor a real old bachelor, if he was as rich as Croesus," "nor a tailor," "not a man with red hair."

Such were the confused ejaculations of a merry band of school-girls, whom their teacher was vainly endeavouring to summon to their studies. At length her bell was heard amid the din of voices, all talking at once, and she laughingly exclaimed, "Young ladies, matrimony need not engross your thoughts for some time to come. You will please come and attend to your lessons. Doubtless, when the time comes, you will, like many others, act entirely contrary to your present feelings."

"As she has done, I remain single," I whispered to my companion: "but I am sure," I emphatically repeated, "that I'll never—no, never, as long as I live, marry a widower."

At the time I made this remark I was a laughing girl of sixteen, with jet black hair and eyes, and said to be full of life and animation.

Soon after, I left school, with a letter, signed by the mistress, to the effect that I was now fully qualified to fill any sphere of usefulness in which I might be destined. My mother had this duly framed and gilded, and I never doubted its truth. Neither did papa's friend, old Mr. Ashburton. He had accumulated a large fortune in the East Indies, and returned to his native land to enjoy it. From my earliest recollection he had been our neighbour and visitor, generally accompanied by a Mrs. Ashburton. He lived in almost princely style. The village bells had tolled some two months since for his third wife, and rumour asserted that he was already looking for some one to supply her place. All the widows of marriageable age, and all the spinsters of every age, were on the alert; and surely the little Ashburtons were never as much caressed as when they were motherless.

No one could assert that Mr. Ashburton was the picture of grief, as he wended his way up our avenue every week. His visits were universally conceded to my father; and no one was more delighted when they were over than myself. Although I inherited too much of my father's courtesy to treat any one rudely, a sight of his portly figure and sandy wig entering our parour inspired me with a desire to leave it. What was my amazement, then, at being summoned into my father's library one day, and having the following note placed in my hand:—

"Ashburton Villa, Tuesday, A. M.

"Dear Miss Emma:

"When Adam was made happy for life,
He was the husband of just one wife;
But my bliss has been of higher degree,
As I have already been blessed with three.
What could mortal man ask more
Than to have you for number four?
We cannot tell how the die will be cast,
Perhaps dear Emma, you will be the last.

"Respectfully yours,
"AARON ASHBURTON."

I burst into an irrepressible laugh, such as school-girls only indulge in, thinking the scroll

nothing but a joke; and was much surprised on glancing at my papa, to see him looking as grave as a judge. He placed a note in my hand in which the billet-doux to myself had been enclosed, saying that Mr. Ashburton was a man of good sense, and, like an honourable gentleman, had first requested his permission to address me. The note was as follows:

"Dear Sir,—If agreeable to Miss Emma and yourself, I should like, as soon as your daughter can make it convenient, to enter once more into the matrimonial state. You know my ample means; and, if Miss Emma consents, I will, on our marriage day, endow her with twenty thousand pounds. Hoping, when next I address you, to be able to sign myself your affectionate son-in-law, I am now,

"Yours faithfully,
"AARON ASHBURTON."

I could endure the scene no longer, and eluding my father's grasp, and donning my hat, ran to tell my bosom friend, Lucy, of the bliss in store for me. We were quite merry over the poetical proposal, Lucy exclaiming, "Who knows, Emma, if you don't survive, but I myself will be number five."

That night, mamma, after tea, came into the council, and dazed by the bait held out, gave her influence in favour of Mr. Ashburton; and I, a thoughtless child, yielded to the entreaties of my parents.

It was not my father's method to neglect business, so I was despatched to my room to write my reply. I sat down to my writing-desk, chose my best paper and pen, when the idea of being anybody's fourth wife, and I only seventeen, struck me as being very absurd. I imagined how Mr. Ashburton must look divested of his wig; then pictured myself walking down the aisle of the village church, at the head of the six Ashburtons, three of them being older than myself.

"Not for twenty millions will I sign away my happiness."

And as I thought of Gerard, with his stalwart, young frame, his raven locks, and fine teeth, his kind heart, and fortune yet to make, I thought I would tell him of my dilemma.

I had just commenced, "My dear Gerard,—Something so strange and ludicrous has happened. Come up to-morrow, and I will tell you all,"—when papa tapped at the door, saying, pleasantly, "Well, Emma, my reply has been sent, and ere this Mr. Ashburton is a happy man."

"What?" I cried. "Oh! papa, what have you done?"

"Don't be excited, child," he answered: "here is the copy of my reply."

"My Dear Sir,—Yours of the 15th instant is just received. I feel highly honoured by your proposal, and my daughter will write her acceptance at once."

"Yours, very sincerely,
"EDWARD STANTON."

"You see, Emma, I have left all sentiment to you."

"Oh, papa!" I repeated, "what have you done?"

But tears and entreaties were of no avail. Papa's dignity could not be compromised, and I was obliged to write an acceptance, which I did in the following brief lines:—

"Dear Sir,—In obedience to my father's demands, I accept of your proposal."

"Yours, &c.,
"EMMA S."

Imagine me now presiding over Mr. Ashburton's establishment. A few short months since a thoughtless school-girl, now addressed as "mother" by six children! One day the new gardener said to me, as I was helping myself to hot-house flowers, "Miss, your pa said I must not let you children pluck those flowers."

My greatest perplexity was with my mother-in-law. They felt a natural anxiety to know something of the character of the new mother of their grandchildren, and made various efforts to judge personally. Shortly after my settlement in my new home, I had been indulging in a forlorn feeling of home-sickness; as in arranging my husband's wardrobe, I had unexpectedly found, among his treasures, three locks of hair carefully preserved. One labelled, "My sainted Ellen;" No. 2, "My sainted Maria;" and the third, "My departed Susan."

"How came I," I cried, "ever to marry such a Bluebeard?"

Here Jane appeared to summon me down to see my husband's mother-in-law. An image of my own dear mother arose in my mind, and I bounded down in haste to throw myself into her arms. What was my disappointment to see a total stranger surveying me through her spectacles with a penetrating gaze?

"Well!" she exclaimed, "has Aaron really made such a fool of himself as to bring a child to reside over his house? Why, he had children enough already for one roof."

To which I mentally responded, "Too many by half."

She went on, "Really, it's enough to make my daughter Ellen wish herself back in this world of trouble—"

Seeing me in tears, she checked herself, and said, "Well, dear! What's done cannot be undone, and we must make the best of it; but I came on purpose to advise you. I have reared ten children, all except nine, who are dead; and you cannot begin training them too young. Have my boxes and trunks taken up to Ellen's room—she will be glad to see her grandmamma."

Human nature could endure no more, and I was about retreating from the room, on the plea of obeying her orders, when I ran into the extended arms of another mother-in-law, who had just arrived.

This one was a complacent-looking old lady, fat, and good-natured, and informed me at once that "She was the mother of the sainted Maria, and had come purposely to see how she liked me for a grandmother to her little pet."

I introduced the old ladies, and left them to have their rooms prepared, and their grandchildren put in presentable order. On my return, I found them in about as amicable a position as a cat and a dog would have been, if shut up in the same room. Each one was asserting that all the good looks and intelligence belonged to her side of the house. The question had not the slightest interest for me, and all participation in the argument was prevented by the entrance of my husband, with an open letter in his hand. After greeting our guests, he informed me that he had just received a letter from his third mother-in-law, saying that she would arrive by the evening train, as she deemed it her duty to give his young wife the benefit of her experience of bringing up children.

No pen can describe the confused state of our mansion during the invasion of these mothers-in-law. They only agreed on one subject, and, unfortunately, that was myself. They thought I was too young; that I did not preside with dignity; that I was not fond of children, and much too fond of dress, &c., &c. Advice was showered upon me from morning until night. At the table, the six children, three grandmothers, and husband, engaged in reminiscences of my predecessors. Each mother insisting that her daughter's portrait should remain in the room she had formerly occupied—I, when seated alone in it, felt as if it was haunted. I steadily refused all entreaties from my husband that my portrait should be added to the number.

I thought that my patience would be entirely exhausted before the old ladies took their departure. The likes and dislikes of their daughters had been rehearsed and re-rehearsed to me, their wishes in regard to their children frequently repeated; until one day I retired to my own room, intending to lock the door for a season of brief quiet. But the mothers-in-law were not so easily evaded. One was at my side with her knitting-work and snuff-box, prepared for a social chat. She said it was natural that I should like to hear my husband's former history, and commenced recounting the three weddings, and three death-bed scenes, and the funerals; ending with an intimation that my husband had had the three deceased ladies buried together in a semicircle, leaving places for two graves more.

"So, dear," she affectionately remarked, "you may console yourself by thinking that you are the last wife he expects to have. The tablet will be placed in the centre when he dies, with the appropriate inscription 'Our husband.'"

The climax had now been reached. I had endured the trial of being the fourth wife and the fourth mother to the children, and almost lost my identity—but this partnership in death I could not tolerate. When the old lady, glancing at my wedding ring, pronounced it to be the very one worn by her daughter, I angrily drew it from my finger, and threw it from me, giving way to such an indignant outbreak, that the old lady jerked her cap on one side, dropped a stitch in her stocking, let her snuff-box roll on the floor, and by her sermons brought all the grandmothers into my apartment. Such a hubbub! Each one was trying to praise her own descendants to the detriment of the rest. I endeavoured to rise and reach my own room, and the effort effectually aroused me. When I opened my eyes, a laughing eye was glancing into my face, and a loving arm around me, and I was greeted with the exclamation, "Why, Emma, darling, what have you been dreaming about this bright sunny day? Why are you so much excited?"

Quite bewildered, I exclaimed, "Why, Gerard, where are all the old ladies? And the portraits! And the children?"

"What old ladies, and what portraits, and children?" he responded. "I found you in dreamland in your own favourite arbour, where your mother bade me seek you."

When I had laughingly rehearsed my dream, Gerard joined in my merriment, and said, "If I meet the happy Mr. Ashburton, I shall certainly challenge him."

But immediately his voice assumed a softer tone, and his eye a more gentle expression. What he said was intended solely for my ear, however. But he could not have taken a more favourable opportunity to urge his suit; and so I became Gerard's first wife instead of Mr. Ashburton's fourth.

A GOOD 'UN.

Scotland and Scotchmen have been the butts of many a joke and the objects of not a few good-natured sarcasms. A *bon mot* of a most fascinating and wealthy lady of French-Canadian origin—now however the wife of an Englishman—is worthy of being placed on record. Around the table after dinner the conversation turned upon Saints and the host—a genial Scotch-Canadian—with pardonable pride was contending that St. Andrew excelled the patrons of England and Ireland in true saintly qualities, when the lady referred to quaintly observed, "Well, if Andrew managed to be a Saint in Scotland his place to eminence deserves to be recognized."

VARIETIES.

NOVEL USE OF THE MISTLETOE.—To English folks the mistletoe is mostly regarded as a plant according special privileges at Christmas-tide; but our friends in Germany seem to make a wider, if not a better, use of it, for an Alsace-Lorraine paper states that for more than thirty years past it has been the custom in Offenbach to collect all the mistletoe for miles around every winter for cattle-feeding purposes. Morning and evening a small bundle of it is given to the milch cows, which devour it greedily. It is said to increase the quantity and improve the quality of their milk, and to impart a rich yellow colour to the butter made from their cream. Mistletoe growing on apple-trees is held to be acid and unsuitable for cows, but is given with advantage to sheep and goats.

A FRENCH FETE.—There is a curious survival of ancient customs in the capital of the Ariège, France, the local *fête* which takes place in the month of October preserving many of the features which characterized it during the Middle Ages. The whole of the town takes part in it, and dancing in the open air begins at one in the afternoon, and, with an interval of a couple of hours for dinner, lasts till day-break the next morning. The spacious promenade of the town is transformed into a ball-room and magnificently illuminated, and upon the eminence above it is a military band. The dancers are divided into three separate groups—to the right the grisettes, in the centre the peasants, and to the left the ladies—the characteristic part of the *fête* being that all classes of the community are expected to take part in it. Occasionally a thunderstorm bursts over the town; but, unless the rain is heavy, the dancing is not interrupted; and it is amusing to see a quadrille or a waltz being gone through under the protection of a forest of umbrellas.

ANECDOTE OF LORD CARDIGAN.—The late Earl of Cardigan, the same gallant nobleman who led the mad and ever-memorable charge at Balaklava, was once riding in all the splendour of his uniform as Colonel of the 10th Hussars in the streets of Brighton, where his regiment was then quartered. As his lordship was turning the corner of a street leading to the Steine, the stalwart driver of a great waggon was ordered to move a little on one side, as the street was narrow. The big-toned driver responded with a grin, and, scooping up a handful of dirt, threw it at the horseman, bespattering his brilliant gold bullion, laces, tags, frogs, and filigree, and all the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war. Whereupon Earl Cardigan instantly dismounted, gave his bridle, with his sword and sabretache, into the hands of a bystander, and there and then, with the Englishman's national weapons, gave the big waggoner the very best thrashing he ever had in his life, leaving him with eyes, mouth, and crimson-streaming nose in the worst possible condition for his photograph, amidst the shouts of laughter and applause of the assembled crowd. Quickly making his way to his horse, his lordship mounted and rode off.

THE FIRST CASTING.—Cast-iron was not in commercial use before the year 1700, when Abraham Darby, an intelligent mechanic, who had brought some Dutch workmen to establish a brass-foundry at Bristol, conceived, says *Hardware*, the idea that iron might be substituted for brass. This his workmen did not succeed in effecting, being probably too much prejudiced in favour of the metal with which they were best acquainted. A Welsh shepherd-boy named John Thomas had, some little time previous to this, been received by Abraham Darby into his workshop on the recommendation of a distant relative. Whilst looking on during the experiments of the Dutch workmen, he said to Abraham Darby that he thought he saw where they had missed it. He begged to be allowed to try; so he and Abraham Darby remained alone in the workshop all night struggling with the refractory metal and imperfect moulds. The hours passed on and daylight appeared, but neither would leave his task; and just as morning dawned they succeeded in casting an iron pot complete. The boy entered into an agreement with Abraham Darby to serve him and keep the secret. He was enticed by the offer of double wages to leave his master, but he continued faithful; and from 1709 to 1828 the family of Thomas were confidential and much-valued agents to the descendants of Abraham Darby. For more than one hundred years after the night in which Thomas and his master succeeded in making an iron casting in a mould of fine sand contained in frames and with air-holes the same process was practised and kept secret at Colebrook Dale with plugged keyholes and barred doors.

GREAT MERIT.

All the fairs give the first premiums and special awards of great merit to Hop Bitters and the purest and best family medicine, and we most heartily approve of the awards for we know they deserve it. They are now on exhibition at the State Fairs, and we advise all to test them. See another column.

FIRST CLASS TAILORING.—A fine assortment of English, Scotch and French tweeds on hand, and made up to order on the premises, under my own personal supervision, at very reasonable rates, at L. Robinson's, 31 Beaver Hall Terrace.