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Poetry.

NEW YEAR'S BELLS.

Ring, bells, ring, with your mellow din,
Ring the old year out and the new year in!
Like the voices of birds from the old gray spire,
Let your silvery music rise higher and higher;
Floating abroad o'er the hillside bare
In billows of sound on the tremulous air,
Let it rise and fall with the fitful gale:
Tell over city and wood the tale;
Say that to-night the old year dies!
Bid the watchers look to the eastern skies,
For the beautiful halo that tells afar
Of the welcome rise of the new year's star!

Ring the old year out, with sighs and tears,
Its withering heart-aches and tiresome fears;
Away with its memories of doubt and wrong,
Its cold deceits and its envious strong,
All its pitiful shams and cold pretense.
We will heap them together and bind them fast
To the old man's head as he totters past.
The ill that he brought he may take again;
Keep we the joys, let him bury the pain!
Ring soft, oh bells, as he goes to rest
Far in the shades of the darkening west!

Ring, bells, ring, with a merry din!
The old year has gone with its care and sin!
Smiling and fair, at the eastern gates,
Clad in tinted light, the new year waits!
Welcome him in with the rosy band,
Who wait the wave of his beckoning hand:
Hope, with her wreaths of sweet spring flowers,
Joy for the summer's glowing hours,
Plenty and peace for the fruitful fall,
And love for all seasons—best of all.
Ring merrily, bells!—o'er the blushing skies
See the beautiful star of the new year rise!

—[FROM THE ALPINE for December.

LITERATURE.

FLORENCE'S CHRISTMAS.

BY ANNA MASON.

"Indeed, I'm thankful to be alone!" sighed Florence Arlington, as she shut her door and turned the key.

And yet she had been shuddering the sunshine of her smile on a merry party of friends and relatives all the evening. Graceful, impetuous, warm-hearted Florence! She it was who had led the children's dances; she who had told them many fanciful tales when little feet began to weary and tender eyelids began to droop; she who had finally coaxed them into nursery bounds when she had repeated in thrilling accents, "Twas the night before Christmas!" after which she had waited to see each little form tucked snugly and warmly into bed. Rejoicing the "grown-up folks" she had assisted in the filling of wee expectant stockings.

Once alone, Florence drew aside the curtain from a window, threw open the blinds, and gazed out on a night clear and beautiful.

"Only one little year ago," she murmured to herself, "and how different it was. Then I was engaged to Julian Clifford. God knows I was happy one year ago. Now—O now, I'm about Harry Ross. How has it all come about?"

Poor impetuous Florence. Well might she question her sad and wayward heart. She had deeply loved Julian, and losing him had been like losing the sunshine from her life.

One year ago this Christmas eve, she had sat by this window musing over his parting words; pressing the beautiful engagement ring he had just placed on her finger to her lips, eagerly anticipating the morrow which means reunion. Sorry days had followed.

Florence had trifled recklessly with her happiness, and for the mere pleasure and excitement of misunderstandings and reconciliations, had often tormented Julian most unmercifully.

At last she had heard, through some over-officious friend, of some action on Julian's part at which she had taken umbrage, and for which she called him to account with so many taunts and sneers, and provoking insinuations, that he too, had become angry, and refused to explain or apologise.

Not dreaming she was creating a breach, too wide to be readily bridged over, Florence had tossed him his ring, declaring they were better off apart.

He had turned to her for one moment, a pale, reproachful face, then without a word left the house.

Since that time she had neither met him nor heard from him.

While Florence was suffering keenly from the pangs of wounded pride and love, Harry Ross, a devoted admirer of other days, had renewed his suit and been accepted. To do Flo-

rence justice, she had told him honestly enough of her but recently conquered love for another.

Mr. Ross was wealthy, and of excellent social position, therefore Florence's parents did not disapprove the match; but, strictly honorable in their sentiments and feelings, they were annoyed by the apparent lightness and fickleness of her behaviour, and they had remonstrated with and questioned her earnestly.

Her style of response, had been reckless enough.

"Wasn't it just as well people should not say she had been jilted by Julian Clifford?" she never expected to be happy again herself, mightn't she as well make poor easily-satisfied Harry so if she could?"

So now she sat musing fitfully of the eventful past year.

"What miserable things our parting and our quarrel were," she muttered, half aloud. "Julian never loved me really, or he could not have given me up so easily. It's more than half a year since we parted, and I've not heard one word in all that time. I wish I could love Harry so if she could!"

She leaned her head upon her hands and sobbed hopelessly.

"If I'd never given my promise to Harry I'd write to Julian and ask him to forgive me."

Would, *even now*. He used to say a woman should be the first to yield in a dispute—he used to say it half in fun, and to see me grow indignant, but it was true. I'm sure pride ever was and ever will be, a stronger passion with him than love. O Julian! do you love me still? Shall I ever know? But this is wicked of me, wicked and weak."

"Florence," interrupted Rita's voice at the door, "a package has just arrived for you. Mother says come down to the library and open it."

"I will soon, dear," replied Florence, quietly resolved none of her friends should suspect the grief she was indulging.

She arose, lighted the gas, smoothed her hair, and bathed her eyes in cologne water. Then she ran hastily down the stairs.

"This package just came for you, Flo," said her mother. "Open it. We're all of us anxious to see its contents."

Mechanically Florence untied the string and took off the wrapper.

Every eye was on the jewel-box she held, and when a sparkling necklace, bracelets and earrings were displayed, there were cries of admiration and delight.

"The Ross diamonds!" exclaimed Rita.

"Harry's wedding gift. O Florence, you lucky girl."

But Florence's face had suddenly become wan and weary. Her nervous hands seemed little disposed to toy with the brilliant jewels. Rita, less scrupulous, caught them from out their nest of satin, and trying them on before the mirror wasted no end of breath in exclamations of delight and murmurs of ecstasy.

"I'm very tired, and will bid you all good-night," said Florence, softly.

She had taken a book from the case, saying to herself, "I should be haunted—a prey to restless thought, if I went to bed now; so I'll read myself sleepy."

Once more in her own room she loosened her long hair, exchanged shoes for slippers, and throwing herself into an easy-chair, prepared to read.

The book she had selected does not seem to chain her attention. She eyes it wearily, turns its leaves with a listless air.

But suddenly indifference ceases! She starts up with a suppressed shriek to fall back pale and faint.

From between the leaves of the book she had dropped a letter, a sealed letter addressed to her in a handwriting she well knew.

In an instant the mystery is solved to her mind. Charles Herbert—her schoolboy brother—must have been sitting in the library when the servant brought up the letter, and taken charge of it. In his usual thoughtless fashion he had left it in the pages of his book and forgotten all about it.

Her solution was correct.

"Why should I open it?" she asked herself bitterly. "It's too late! too late!"

When at last she read it, it was in a whirl of mingled emotions in which she could not tell whether pleasure or pain predominated.

"Love has conquered pride," began the letter.

"Come back to me, Florence, darling! I do not doubt your love, and judge from the agony in my own heart that you must suffer; I have never done you the least wrong, sweetheart, and could easily have explained the trifling error you so harshly misjudged. Because I do love you I am the first to say forgive my haste and my anger. Spare me further humiliation and bid me return to happiness and to you."

"Spare you humiliation, Julian?" cried Florence, with. "I will, even if I humble myself to the dust!"

Without pausing for reflection, she opened her writing desk and wrote:

"JULIAN.—It's forever too late for me to bid you to return to me, yet I must write you a few words of explanation. You must have thought me heartless and cruel indeed to have passed over in silence your note of last June. But I never received it till this Christmas—it is Christmas now, the bells are ringing mid-night."

"It has been lost; but to-night it dropped at my feet from between the leaves of a book. I thought you had left me forever, without one word of regret, and taking counsel with pride I persuaded myself I was listening to the voice of generosity, when I promised my hand to another. No doubt you have heard of my engagement. I make my humiliating confession, even at this late hour, because I cannot bear you should believe I could have scorned your apology, or thought lightly of your love. Forgive me, as I can never forgive myself, and forget poor unhappy

"FLORENCE."

She sealed and addressed this letter ready for its destination in the morning. The night was a sleepless one, but from its troubled thoughts and silent sufferings Florence evolved a resolution.

Come what would of it, she would never marry Harry Ross. To-morrow she would tell him, distinctly, in such a manner as would compel him to accept her decision as final. If, for a moment, a faint hope came with this resolution that Julian might return, she put the thought from her as dishonorable.

"I should think of no one but poor Harry now. It cannot be my duty to marry him simply because he loves me, when I cannot return him love for love. It would be unjust. Some day he, too, would see it so and reproach me for it!"

Christmas day dawned bright and clear. Mr. Ross accompanied the family to morning service and returned with her to Christmas dinner. To every one but poor uneasy Florence, the meal was, perhaps, a festive one enough.

She treated Harry with a gentle consideration which was a marked change from the impatient and irritable manner which usually characterized her conduct towards her lover. He may have felt gratified thereby, but at the same time he was puzzled and uneasy.

"Harry," began Florence, abruptly, the moment they found themselves alone in the library, "I do not love you as you deserve to be loved—not well enough to marry you."

"My dear Florence, you have said that a hundred times. I love you well enough to wait and strive to deserve and win your love," replied Harry, biting his lip indignantly.

But Florence resumed, with quiet determination.

"Did I not once tell you, Harry, that I had loved Julian Clifford and had been engaged to him?"

"Certainly you told me all that, Florence, and I begged you never to speak to me of it again, but to endeavor to forget it, as I shall do."

"But, Harry, I cannot forget," went on Florence, speaking rapidly, for her present task was painful in the extreme to her. "I loved him most truly, and for a time I was almost wild with the thought that he had given me up for a little quarrel, without an effort at reconciliation. I've just learned that he wrote and asked pardon of me who was most to blame."

"And you would recall him, Florence; is it not so?" demanded Harry, in a choking voice, his ruddy complexion becoming pale.

Her troubled eyes were bent persistently downward.

"He does not think me free," she murmured, in a voice so low as to be scarcely audible. "It's not likely we'll ever meet again. But I cannot marry you, Harry, nor any one else. It is impossible."

"Say no more, Florence. God knows my heart is sad enough! but I must give you up—I cannot keep you to the mere letter of your promise. You never loved me as I could have wished, and now that all hope is over of ever winning your love, I release you."

Florence was weeping.

"I return to you your jewels, Harry. I pray they may be worn by a more loving far wistful bride than ever I could have been."

"Thank you, Florence. I believe you are sincere in your kind wishes. Thank you—lost than one hundred and fifty miles. Besides the shortening of distance between the east and west, the time and expense saved in travelling, the through traffic on the line from the west will be largely reduced—a matter of no small importance to us who have not yet learned to raise our own heads."

She broke the news of his departure and its cause to her parents somewhat abruptly.

"It was all my fault," she added, earnestly. "Mr. Ross acted nobly and generously throughout."

"O Florence!" sighed her mother, "You will make yourself talked about everywhere. Two engagements broken within one year—it's disgraceful!"

Throughout the remaining festivities of the day Florence could see she had cast a cloud over her parents' enjoyment, although they were too truly unselfish to let it shadow the enjoyment of others. She felt like one moving in a dream.

Mirth was at its height, the Christmas tree lighted and revealed to the eager little ones, while Mr. Arlington, enacting the beneficent Santa Clause was distributing its treasures, when a servant announced a gentleman in the reception-room to see Miss Florence.

"It's very cold there; why didn't you ask him in here?" questioned Mrs. Arlington.

"I did, ma'am," replied the servant, as Florence without a word of comment swept from the room. "He said he only wished to see the young lady."

Florence trembled violently as she opened the door of the reception-room.

There, by the mantel, stood Julian Clifford, pale and still beneath the glare of gas-light. He turned as she entered, gazed at her with a searching look, then extended his arms towards her.

With an eager cry of joy she sprang to him and was folded in his embrace.

"Is this another man's promised bride that I hold in my arms?" he asked, bitterly.

"No, Julian! No!"

"Then I claim you, my love, now and forever. We have long ago given our hearts to each other, Florence, and that should make us forbearing and ready to forgive. Perhaps we needed the painful discipline we have received."

"O Julian, generous as ever! I, only, have been to blame. Can you, indeed, forgive me? What a happy Christmas this is for me, which gives me back my dearest treasure—your love!"

There were many questions to ask and many things to explain on both sides. The happy lovers took no heed of time.

The family began to wonder. They wondered still more when Julian Clifford stood once again in their midst.

He explained matters in a manly, straightforward way, and added:

"Forgive her, as I do—as Mr. Ross, the most deeply injured of all, does. For the rest, forget what is past."

Florence's engagement to me is the only true one—I never released her."

"I am sorry to cast blame on my daughter," responded Mr. Arlington, angrily; "but I cannot consider her conduct honorable. I am mortified beyond the power of words to explain, at her fickleness, heartlessness, meanness!"

[From the Aroostook Pioneer.]

SHORT CUT TO THE WEST.

Any new railway scheme by which the interior of our State is to be brought into closer connection with large business centres is always in order. Maine, although far behind many younger States in railway enterprise, is rapidly coming to the front, and lastening the time when its vast resources can be profitably developed. The latest project for this purpose, but more particularly for the purpose of opening a shorter and more direct route for eastern travel to the west, is attracting attention. We refer to the MEGANTIC RAILWAY, thirty miles of which are soon to be opened for traffic.

The line begins at Sherbrooke, on Grand Trunk above Island Pond, and runs about 60 miles to the Maine boundary; thence to Greenville, at the foot of Moose Head Lake a distance of 55 miles; thence to a point on the E. & N. A. Railway, at or near Lincoln, a distance of 35 miles; thence to Princeton, a distance of 45 miles; thence along a line of Railway, now built, a distance of about 8 miles; thence to a point on the N. B. & C. Railroad (touching at St. Stephen) a distance of 10 miles; thence to St. Andrews, a distance of 15 miles, making in all, from Sherbrooke to St. Andrews, 247 miles, or about 350 miles from Montreal to St. Andrews.

We are unable to give the exact difference in distance between this route and the one now travelled via Maine Central to Danville Junction, but think it cannot be less than one hundred and fifty miles. Besides the shortening of distance between the east and west, the time and expense saved in travelling, the through traffic on the line from the west will be largely reduced—a matter of no small importance to us who have not yet learned to raise our own heads."

In the article of flour alone, it is estimated that on the completion of this new road not less than 200,000 barrels will be annually brought over it for consumption in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. This is only one of the many advantages resulting from the completion of Megantic Railway. All Canadian importations during the winter from Europe for the upper portion of the Dominion, will be landed at St. Andrews, (a port always open to navigation,) and sent by rail to their destination. The English mail would no doubt be sent by the same route, as the shortest, quickest and most certain route in winter. The great change in the condition of St. Andrews which will be brought about upon completion of the road, few can estimate. Its old dilapidated, tumble-down rattletraps would give place to stately blocks filled with costly merchandise, and its beautiful bay and harbor be crowded with the sails of every nation. Ocean steamers, to and from Liverpool, would touch at St. Andrews, landing and shipping passengers and mails for and from the upper Provinces. Those who think St. Andrews beyond the power of reconstruction, had better suspend judgment till after the completion of the Megantic Railway.

INGENUITY OF A SPIDER.—A correspondent writes to *Nature* that a spider constructed its web in an angle of his garden, the sides of which were attached to shrubs by long threads at the height of nearly three feet from the gravel path beneath. Being much exposed to the wind, the equinoctial gales of this autumn destroyed the web several times.

The ingenious spider now adopted a new contrivance. It secured a conical fragment of gravel, with its larger end upwards, by two cords, one attached to each of its opposite sides, to the apex of its wedge-shaped web, and left it suspended as a movable weight to be opposed to the effect of such gusts of air as had destroyed the webs previously occupying the same situation.

The spider must have descended to the gravel path for this special object, and, having attached threads to a stone suited to its purpose, must have afterwards raised this by fixing itself upon the web, and pulling the weight up to a height of more than two feet from the ground, where it hung suspended by elastic cords.

History came very near repeating itself in Duluth the other day, and another mischievous narrowly escaped publication in the newspapers. A boy there got into a Saratoga trunk just for fun, when the lid suddenly came down and the spring lock clicked. The search for a dress by a girl, half an hour later, was very successful.

Old Dr. T— was noted for his ready wit and sure-fire replies. While taking a walk one day he was met by two young men, who thought to play a practical joke on the old gentleman. Said one of them, "Good morning, Doctor; have you heard the sad news, this morning?" "Well, no," said the Doctor, "I have not." "Is it anything very serious?" "Oh, yes, Doctor, said the other, "The Devil is dead!" The old gentleman looked at them for a moment in silence, and slowly raising his hands above his head, exclaimed: "May the Lord have mercy on his two fatherless hairs."

A Mississippi boatman with immense feet, stopping at a public house on the levee, asked the porter for a box jack to pull off his boots. The colored gentleman, after examining the stranger's feet, broke out as follows:—"No jack here big nuff for dem feet. Jackass couldn't pull 'em off, massa, widout fracturing de leg. Yess better go back about tree miles to de forks in dereal an' pull 'em off dar."

The saddest man in the city, lately, was the one who had been told that the first snow of the season was the proper thing to which to break in his new boots. He says, if he can find the walking encyclopaedia who dispensed such gratuitous information, he will show him a whinkle in the boot-breaking business which, though having no claim to novelty, has always been attended by a large amount of satisfaction to the wearer.

An English girl laughs at the idea that a woman cannot live comfortably with her mother-in-law, and advertises for some good looking young fellow to give her a chance to try the experiment.

A man in Boston, in his hurry to assist a fainting lady, got a bottle of murexage instead of ammonia, and bathed her face with it. She was a good deal stuck up with his attention.

Recent experiments with cats have proved that a full developed tabby can successfully evade the rapid approach of two boot-jacks, a bar of castile soap, a pair of No. 1 boots, a gold watch, a blinding brush, and a fierce pistol.