



The Family Circle.

A RHYME OF THE YEAR.

January! January!
Though cold, you have no law,
You make us freeze
Just when you please,
And then you go and thaw.

February! February!
I think it's very queer
That on the way
You lose a day,
And find it in Leap Year.

Oh, windy March! you are too loud,
You do make such a noise,
You frisk about,
Now in, now out,—
It's worse than girls and boys.

Cry-baby April comes along,
You never can tell whether
She's going to smile
Or cry a while—
She has such funny weather.

Then little May comes tripping in,
Uncertain as her name is;
We May have snow,
The wind May blow,
Or May be lots of daisies.

Oh, lovely June! oh, lovely June!
You're everything together!
Your skies so fair,
Your flowers so rare,
Oh, stay, delightful weather!

Please find us fans now, hot July,
Dominion Day is here;
Let's sit up late
To celebrate—
You come but once a year.

Oh, August! you're a lovely moon,
I wonder where you found it!
So big and bright
For many a night,
And then a ring around it.

September, you'd be very nice,
But always as a rule,
That when our fun
Seems just begun,
You take us back to school.

October! where's your friend, Jack Frost?
You always come together,
With lovely leaves
On all the trees,
And hazy, dreamy weather.

November, you're almost too dull,
And cold, and damp and drear;
The turkeys say
Thanksgiving Day
They dread through all the year.

Oh! dear December, hurry on.
Oh, please—oh please come quick;
Bring snow so white,
Bring fires so bright,
And bring us good St. Nick!

Adapted.

MARION'S NEW YEAR'S VISITORS.

BY MYRA GOODWIN PLANTZ.

"It's a perfect shame we can't keep 'open house,'" said Belle, making her fair face look more like a peach-blossom than ever, by the pink "cloud" she was tying on.

"You are going to have fun enough at Kitty Farrow's, but think of me, at the W.O.T.U. Rooms," said Nettie mournfully.

"Too bad we have to be separated, but who wants to invite three sisters, 'three roses on a single stem'; it is somebody's duty to get married," replied Marion laughing.

"I despair of ever being Miss Hanna, but don't let me hurry you, old lady. There is one thing I rise to remark; we don't have the larks we did before you formed your 'Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Mothers.' We used to keep open house, and never worried about expense or trouble," said Belle, with a shade of regret.

"Yes, and mother stayed out in the kitchen all day, overseeing the oysters and coffee, and then had a sick headache three days," answered Nettie.

"Saint Marion is right. There's the bell; the boys have come. Good-bye, sis.

Don't forget your foolish sisters in your prayers to-night."

Two quick kisses were dropped on the earnest face of the elder sister, and the girls in party array tripped down stairs. Marion sighed, and for a moment regretted her refusal to join in the frolic they would have. She expected a busy day on the morrow, for the teachers of the South Mission were going to receive their pupils in the chapel, as their New Year's celebration. Besides, Marion always sought a quiet hour New Year's eve, to "invoice," as she called it, and make plans for the improvement of the coming year.

It was her housekeeping week, so there were several duties to be attended to; then Marion drew her low rocker before the glowing grate, and began her annual character house-cleaning.

In a few moments the room seemed filled with strange forms.

"Who are you?" asked Marion in surprise.

"Your resolution committee of last year," replied one, who seemed to be the chairman, or woman, as the case might be. "We heard you were keeping open house to-night, so thought we would make our annual report. I am the resolution called 'Keeping a Diary.'"

"I remember," replied Marion hastily. "I thought it would be a good habit to keep a record of my inner life for self-improvement."

"Also, if I remember," continued Diary Resolution, "in case you became a famous woman, there would be material for the 'life and letters of'—"

"You must have misunderstood my motive," interrupted Marion, coloring guiltily. "I did invite you last year, I admit, but I had to give you up, for I haven't time during the day, and am too sleepy at night to write a respectable diary. I don't see how people ever write those beautiful journals and do anything else."

"Why did you come?" she asked, turning to one who held a Bible open at the book of Judges.

"You called me last year. I am the resolution to read the Bible through in a year. I stayed with you thus far," pointing to the open page.

"I am sorry I failed, but there were so many dreadful stories in Judges, I began skipping, and I am so busy, I confess I can't do much more than read the Sunday-school lesson and my 'Daily Food.'"

One member of the committee had been rising constantly, trying to speak, so Marion said, "Pray, what broken resolution are you?"

"I am 'Going to Class-meeting every Sunday.' I was called six times during the year."

"Well, I am sorry I failed there, for it is a great spiritual help; besides, the girls never go unless I do. But we have breakfast too late on Sunday."

"Perhaps if you had kept me, it might have been easier to have kept those before me," said an untidy looking individual, who gave unmistakable signs of a hasty toilet. "I am the good resolution 'Getting up Early.' I was kept a week, and called in every picnic or horse-back excursion."

Marion groaned. "I meant to keep you, and always go to breakfast looking as I do when we have company. I have abused you, I know, often missed family prayers, and lost many precious hours of study, but I am too sleepy to rise in the morning."

"Perhaps if you had kept, my sister, 'Going to Bed Early,' you might have kept me," suggested Early Rising.

Several other broken resolutions rose to speak; one was, "Giving a Tenth to the Lord;" another, "Never Use Slang;" and a third, "Taking Care of the Health." "Reading less Fiction" might have been the fourth, for it was armed to the teeth with learned looking books.

"I really thought I had improved," cried poor Marion. "Have I, then, failed in every way, this year?"

"You have kept me most of the time," replied a happy-looking individual. "You asked for a cure for sensitiveness. That generally means a cure for obscure, refined selfishness. You have been overcoming in this, all the year."

"I am very glad," replied Marion humbly. "People are so much more careful of my feelings lately. I have thought the girls were better natured, and

Ned less of a tease. I am sure mother is more patient; or can it be, forgetting Marion Hanna leaves no place uncovered for wounds? I am sure I don't want to be so sensitive, especially if, as you say, it is but one form of selfishness. How can I always keep you with me?"

"There is but one way for sensitive people to live happily," replied Unselfishness: "Look to Jesus and forget Marion Hanna."

The clock on the marble mantel struck twelve, and Marion started from her reverie. It did not matter whether it was a sleeping or walking dream. She had her key-note for the coming year. She began it with a season of grateful prayer, and made no new resolves.

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"Girls, I've sworn off on going out so much. Going to turn over a new leaf," said Ned at the breakfast table next morning. "Marion is the only one of the lot who looks bright enough to support an idea this morning. Sis, how many good resolutions did you sleep on, last night?"

"Not any, brother, except to look more closely at my Pattern. My New Year's verse is, 'Looking unto Jesus, the author, and finisher of our faith.'"—*Zion's Herald*.

HOW THE CHINESE NEW YEAR IS KEPT.

BY FANNIE ROPER FEUDGE.

It falls usually during the first week in February, and very near the 6th instant. To the Celestial it is the grandest jubilee of all the year, and is observed by men, women, and children of every grade, from the Emperor down to the humblest subject; and not alone with the Empire, but on sea and land, at home and abroad, wherever a Chinese community may chance to be on this propitious day. Though always a day of feasting and rejoicing, in 1888 it was celebrated by the Chinese in this country with more éclat than ever before, because of the opening of a new "joss-house" in the Chinese quarter of San Francisco, Cal.; and in 1889 it was observed with surpassing splendor, wherever the Chinese are found, because of the expected marriage of the young Emperor. Enormous sums of money were spent by the Chinese Government in preparations for the double celebrations of the royal nuptials, and the time-honored festival of the "New Year," which it is said was to be observed on this joyful occasion with many new features, indicating progress among that ancient people in the newer inventions of the people of the West.

Well, though the Chinese have a way of their own for doing everything, and not always the best way, yet there are some lessons that even we with all our boasted civilization, may profitably learn of them. For example, on every New Year's morning, each man and boy, from the Emperor to the humblest peasant, pays a visit to his mother, and carries her a present which varies in value according to his station and pecuniary ability. He thanks his mother very devoutly for all she has done for him in the past, and humbly asks for a continuance of her favor for another year. This matter of reverence for parents is a cardinal virtue among the Chinese, duly inculcated from early childhood, and so ingrained into the very warp and woof of the daily life, that the mother's influence over her sons usually lasts, for bane or blessing, all through their existence.

Another excellent custom is the squaring up of old accounts, and as far as possible paying off every debt before the close of the old year, so that the New Year's dawn may be unclouded by a single anxiety concerning the one just ended. This is deemed so requisite to a man's good standing in business, that the rule is generally observed, even though it be necessary to sell off goods cheaper than at any other time, or at heavy pecuniary loss.

While father and sons are thus engaged in store and counting-room, mothers and their daughters are equally busy in renovating and adorning the home. Every niche and corner of the dwelling is thoroughly cleansed and must put on its gala dress of flowers, flags, and mottoes before New Year's dawn; a feast of good things is to be prepared; and above all, the household altar must be newly decorated, flowers fresh and fair laid thereon, and candles and incense lighted to welcome the

incoming year with joy and gladness. Flaming red papers bearing appropriate devices, or expressive of some wish for "good luck" are placed over or beside each door and lintel, huge lustrous transparencies float above, and sundry devices in the form of dragons, sea-monsters, etc., intended to keep off evil spirits, are displayed everywhere.

Every hill-top, temple, and street is gaily decorated with flags and paper lanterns of huge dimensions, and the idols in the temples are decked in silken robes and adorned with glittering jewels. Bonts, houses, and fences are freshly painted and adorned profusely with long strips of bright red paper upon which are inscribed in black and gilt letters, good wishes, congratulations, and compliments to all who may chance to pass that way, and every street and lane is crowded with well-dressed people, who for the time seem to have no thought but for this festive occasion. Some are calling on friends and relatives, porters are bearing loads of presents to various houses, and crowds are wending their way to the temples and "joss-houses." Every worshipper goes laden with gifts; and the altars of the gods of wealth, of war, of medicine, letters, fire, and many others, are literally piled with offerings of flowers, fruit, confectionery, and some more costly wares.

Each devotee selects from the group the "god" he specially desires to propitiate, lights his "incense-sticks," places them before the idol and performs his devotions with sundry prostrations, salaams, and murmured words unintelligible to all but himself, and then retires to spend the rest of the day in mirth and jollity—feasting, visiting, fireworks, or gambling as may be most in accord with his special proclivities. But his religion comes first. The devotees before the "god of wealth" are especially numerous among the Chinese, as among other nations.

On New Year's Eve sacrifices are made to the old year, and the custom of watching out its last expiring moments is strictly observed by the Chinese; and during the whole night the streets are thronged. At dawn on the New Year's Day every door is closed for a time, and streets comparatively deserted. But after a very brief lull all hands wake up to a renewal, with interest, of noisy mirth, which is then kept up for a week at least, and with the wealthy for a much longer time.

The New Year being considered the most propitious day of all the year for important negotiations many betrothals and marriages take place at this time, thus increasing the hilarity of both family and social gatherings.

Another very pleasant custom I observed among the Chinese while living among them. Every visitor who called on New Year's Day was sure to go away loaded with presents—or rather to have them taken to his home by a servant. The gift is always accompanied by many compliments and good wishes from the donor. The value of the presents varies, of course, with the wealth or generosity of the giver—it may be only a basket of fruit, a vase of flowers, a pretty fan, or package of choice tea, but it carries with it the "New Year" charm, and is a pleasing token of friendly regard that is always welcome. It was especially so to us, as strangers and foreigners so far away from home.

Then, whenever Americans or Europeans look into the Chinese temples, from motives of curiosity, to witness the ceremonies of the day, they always receive a courteous salutation and an invitation to enter; for a Chinese, whether in business, religion, or pleasure, is always a gentleman. We who are Christians, and who claim for ourselves a higher civilization, may well learn of these foreigners to welcome them kindly to our churches and Sunday-schools, and try to lead them to the knowledge and worship of the true God. We have been sadly remiss concerning the millions who after these nearly nineteen centuries, are yet "without hope and without God" and strangely slow in carrying to them the words of life. Now that God has brought some of the heathen to our doors, and given to us, here in our own fair land, a sight of the folly and sin of idolatry, shall we still close our eyes to its abominations, and permit the enemy, while we sleep, to sow the tares of paganism upon Christian soil?—*Ex.*