

Family Circle.

The New Year.

I am the little New Year, ho, ho!
Here I come tripping it over the snow,
Shaking my bells with a merry din,
So open your doors and let me in.

Blessings I bring for each and all,
Big folk and little folk, short and tall;
Each one from me a treasure may win,
So open the door and let me in.

Some shall have silver and some shall have gold;
Some shall have new clothes and some shall have old;
Some shall have brass and some shall have tin,
So open the door and let me in.

Some shall have water and some shall have milk;
Some shall have satin and some shall have silk;
But each one from me a blessing may win,
So open the door and let me in.

Romance of a Letter.

She was a beautiful, attractive woman, black-eyed and crimson cheeked, with a splendid bust, and arms which she did not mind showing. I was a little, pale creature, neither ugly nor pretty, but I did not envy her. Let all the men on earth admire her—one loved me. If I was fair in his eyes I cared nothing for her. The other girls were jealous at times. Madge, Burt and Barbara Brown declared that there was no such thing as getting any attention from any one where she was, and certainly she tried her best to fascinate. Militant Bray was her name, and I understood that, young as she was, she was a divorced woman.

It may have been that she was very much ill-used by her husband, and had been the injured party altogether. I presume it is often so—but pure women will bear a great deal rather than sever the holy tie that binds them to a husband's side, and there is always a doubt about a divorce.

Some of the ladies at Mrs. Horton's shrugged their shoulders and wondered what the old lady had been thinking of to take Mrs. Bray in. The gentlemen, however, fought in her defence. Beautiful, musical, fond of flirtation and apt at flattery, she won her way into their liking. For my part, I did not respect her one whit. I did not see anything to love in her, but I admired her. Unlike most women, I always found myself able to see the charm that men see in a personally attractive woman.

But were I a man I could not do as men do—flatter these flirts at the expense of true-hearted women who love them with all their souls. When good Mrs. Carman went to her room with tears in her eyes, leaving Mr. Carman whispering soft nothings in Mrs. Bray's ear, and when little Effie Fay crimsoned and trembled with anger because her lover forgot her while he turned the beauty's music and looked down into her eyes. I often thought to myself that those were poor triumphs after all, and those men who gave them to her were but silly creatures. She liked none of them. She mocked them and had little nick-names for each. She was cold in heart as she was warm in manner. Her impassioned glances were those of an actress and nothing more.

She gave these glances to my Harry as well as to others, but I had no fear of their effect. Of course he knew that she was handsome and that she sang well. So did I.

We had met at Mrs. Horton's. I was an orphan and taught music for my bread; he was a young clerk in a wholesale house. At our first meeting we had liked each other, and he was the only lover I had ever had. When I gave him my betrothal kiss it was with lips that had never met those of any man before, and I was glad to think of it. We had been engaged three months, and were to be married in the spring.

We were wrapped up in each other, and I believed concerned ourselves very little about Mrs. Bray. I did not. It pleased me better to think of better women. There were others whose minds were continually running on her, however. Jealous Effie Fay could never quite forget her. Over and over again she sat in her room, with tears pouring down her cheeks, and talked of her.

"She's a wretch!" she declared; "a bold, forward, cruel creature. She knows Charley is engaged to me. She knows it. I see it in her eyes, and she works so hard to get him to herself. Charlie doesn't know what he is doing for himself. I will break with him yet, and I do love him so. No one will ever love him so much!"

Then she would cry again and begin the old story of Mrs. Bray's conduct, of her looks, her contrivances, her tricks and smiles. I felt sorry for the child—she was but sixteen and sorry, too, for Charlie, who was acting as most foolish boys do under those circumstances. But one morning she began another strain.

"Mrs. Bray is at work with your Harry now," she said, "and she'll twist him round her finger soon, as she does my Charlie. Its witchcraft those women have—an unholy power of some kind. You will see, Effie, as I do soon."

As the day went on I noticed one or two things that were suspicious. I saw that she contrived to meet my lover in the halls and on the stairs, to sit

near him at dinner time, to go out upon the balcony when he did.

Charlie Beech was allowed to slip back into his old place in Effie's heart, and my Harry was Mrs. Bray's object.

Effie had been sharper than I, but Harry was too strong in love for me to yield. I felt sure.

It was about the time that Harry's business compelled him to choose a boarding-place further down town. He left Mrs. Horton's and only called to see me in the evenings, and we began to write to each other. I have the little notes he wrote me carefully hidden away even now.

They are very precious to me. As I read them over they bring those hours back again, and I am a young and loving girl once more.

I never loved Harry more tenderly than when I sat down to my desk one morning to tell him of a little festivity which I had been invited to attend, and to ask his escort. I never shall forget that day. After I had posted the letter I sat in my own room and sewed upon the pretty dress I intended to wear, thinking all the while that it was Harry's favorite color, and that he would be sure to like it.

Effie, happy in her recovered lover, sat with me and read aloud from a little book of verses that Charlie had given her. They were not fine verses, nor was she an elegant reader, but there was love in them and in her heart, and that sufficed.

I had finished the dress, and sat looking down into the street, when I saw a boy hurrying along. It was the errand boy at Harry's place, and Effie, who had seen him also, ran down stairs to bring my note to me, for we both knew that it was my answer that shimmered in the little white envelope in his hand. She ran down gaily, humming a tune. She returned with a very serious face. A note was in her hand, with my name upon it in Harry's writing, but her expression frightened me so that I caught my breath.

"What is it, Effie?"

"Ethel," she said, very sadly, "I must tell you, though you'll hate me. The boy who brought that note brought one for Mrs. Bray."

"Why should that trouble me?" I inquired.

"Don't you see your Harry must have written both?" she asked.

"No," said I. "I do not. I am not jealous of Harry."

Then I broke the seal, and these were the words I read:

"MADAM,—I have another engagement, and am obliged to decline yours, I. H. HARRISON."

I put the billet down with a strange chill at my heart. What had I done to deserve this? What should I do? A note like this from a betrothed lover whom I had parted from with the tenderest caresses! Effie saw that I was in trouble, and forebore to question me, but she glided out of the room and did not return for an hour.

When she came back her face was wet with tears.

"You cannot tell me what it is?" she asked.

I answered:

"I must have offended him unconsciously. I can't say anything more."

When the dinner bell rang I went down stairs as usual. Passing the parlor door I saw Mrs. Bray. She was reading a note aloud.

"I declare I was never so surprised," she said.

"I thought he was in love with that little girl. Ah! there she comes."

She hurried away as she spoke, in assumed terror.

The next moment I saw Effie speak to her, and a white paper pass into her hands. Whatever it was she knew and would tell me. She did. That evening she brought a letter into my room—a letter that Mrs. Bray had exhibited to all the house—a love letter from Harry Heathcote, tenderer and more passionate than any he had ever written to me, and with his undoubted signature at its foot.

It was no forgery. I even knew the paper, a rare and costly kind, with his own monogram upon it. It began "Darling," and ended with "Your own Harry."

I did not scream, I did not swoon: I faced the terrible truth as best I might. She had won him from me; but I was in no wise to blame. I was true. I was sinned against, not sinning, and the blow should not crush me.

I did not even allow myself to play the mourner. Contempt of my lover had taken the place of love. He would know that I did not grieve for him; and I asked good old Mr. Halloran to be my escort to the party next evening with a smile on my face, though my heart ached sorely, and life seemed a cold and cruel thing to me.

They told me I was gay that night. I chatted, I ate and drank, I danced whenever I was asked to do so. All the while the words of that letter Harry had written to Mrs. Bray were in my heart.

When old Mr. Halloran took me home he told me "I had wearied myself out and was beginning to feel it." But I was strong yet.

As I went up stairs old Mrs. Horton looked out of her room.

"Your beau was here to-night," she said. "I expect he was cut up to find you out, but Mrs. Bray took care of him."

I tried to laugh. All my life I felt I must now laugh when I had rather cry. I must hide my heart. No one should speak of me as one who had been jilted.

I wrapped myself in my dressing-gown and sat before the fire. I could not sleep, I could not even lie down. The clock struck twelve, one, two, and still I watched the dying embers. Ten minutes more had gone by, when suddenly a frightful shriek rang through the house—another and another.

I rushed to the door. Other people were in the entry. The shrieks came from Mrs. Bray's room, and ere we could think the door was flung open and

she rushed toward us, her long white hair flying, her eyes staring, her hands outstretched.

"I don't know what it is, but I feel as if I should die," she cried, "I feel as if I should die."

Her dress was torn, her face was pale, her hands were cold. She was gasping for breath.

"What is it, Mrs. Bray?" I cried, "what is it?"

"I don't know," she gasped, "I don't know. I feel as if I should die."

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