

the quiet and the night. In my reverie I saw dear dim faces of the Long Ago rise before my half-shut eyes, and the veiled outlines of forgotten hours of delight, and all the high hopes brought low, and all the dismantled dreams of youth passed in mockery of my age and loneliness.

The Year lay dying in the lap of Winter. Outside, the North Wind blew with a sound like the shriek of steel in battle, but sometimes sinking to a hoarse sigh, and again uttering a thin shuddering wail of despair that seemed to come from far aerial regions, attenuated by long distance, or to rise through a sundering veil like muffled moaning of lost souls in hell. The North Wind chanted the requiem of the Year. And the pallid, wandering Moon, hearkening to the wailing threne, for very grief hid her face in the drifting clouds. She would have wept if she could. But she was old, and her heart was dry. But the winds wept, and shrilly sighed through the leafless trees, and their lament grew louder, for the Year's life was almost spent.

High and ever higher rose the flames on the hearth, burning out their own desire. As I stared upon them, to my excited imagination they assumed the semblance of a funeral pyre. On all things in the chamber the gloom lay like the dust of ages. Only a little circle of firelight, in which I sat, resisted its encroachments, and ever and anon, as the flame momentarily fell, the darkness crawled threateningly nearer. Suddenly, out of the gloom the clock struck twelve. Swiftly the fire went down, and its last red spark flickered and died. One long unearthly wail trembled through the outer air; then silence sank.

But now, up the dark stairway, and through the long black corridor, came the tread of ghostly feet and the trail of garments of the grave. In the gruesome midnight the portal of the room slowly opened, and there entered a strange procession. Thirteen shrouded spirits bore the dead Old Year in funeral train, and Death himself strod at their head, rejoicing in his latest triumph over Time. Over the stark corpse was spread a pall, but his grey locks, that in his youth had been golden, streamed over his sheeted shoulder. Thrice the grim crew marched slowly round the chamber, and the gloom was now lighted by the spectral glare of their deathly eyes, and all the while that dangling frame of ancient bones strode at their head, and my body grew stiff with fear. Then the bier upon which was stretched the death-tranced form they laid upon the floor, and, laughing hellish laughter, danced around it. And what Protean shapes they did assume! Fantastic, devilish forms glided thither and hither in the shadows of the corners, writhed in and out among the curtains of the bed and casement, and climbed with mocking, leering, hideous faces upon my chair, till I dared not call my soul my own. Faster and thicker they thronged, from every nook of shadow, nay, on wings in the very air, gibing and gibbering; and at length—O God!—Death himself, with bony hand outstretched, advanced to seize me. Closer and closer he comes, he has me in his clammy grasp, I cannot escape!—I yelled horribly in my mad terror and my senses fled.

When I awoke from my nightmare-haunted slumbers, the cloud-wrack in the sky had drifted from off the face of the moon, which now shone with unveiled and silvery beauty. The stars, too, lemed with unusual brilliance, and the winds were voicing soft sounds, half mournful for the death of the Old Year, half joyous for the advent of the New.

GWYN ARAUN.

AURORÆ.

December hung her glittering roof
Of frosty sunshine o'er the earth,
The streamers danced across the night
Like angels in a troop of mirth.
I stood in the deserted street,
A child that never saw a flower,
Till, looking upward, God unveiled
The face of beauty in that hour.

Around, the city, dark and dumb,
Above, the gleaming mystery,—
I stood like one who views afar
The flashing of an awful sea.
Like the bright fingers of a god,
That sweep creation's mystic bars,
They seemed on night's wind-harp to wake
The song of all the eternal stars.

Their thrillant glory filled my trance,
With eyes turned upward, wonder-wide,
Till every wave of pulsing joy
Rose towering in a swell of pride.
I blessed the night, I blessed the stars,
I blessed the chance that found me there,
But chief, the floods of streaming light,
Like young Aurora's golden hair.

And still their shifting glow shall warm
The winters of my life again,
Their phantom-banners wave sublime
Across the night's star-flowery plain.
My heart with wild delight to fill,
And bid my yearning soul aspire
To Nature's altar, crowned with song,
And bright with beauty's golden fire.

Berlin.

JOHN KING.

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