

New Year's Chimes.

The New Year's chimes rang forth upon the midnight air in all their mel- low sweetness, and many a heart beat quicker as this fresh page of life was turned, and the fair young year came laden with fresh gifts of love and glad- ness.

In the spacious apartments of Laurel House a numerous and joyous party had assembled to dismiss the old year and to welcome the new. Many were the peals of laughter that resounded from youthful hearts, upon which the hand of care had not yet rested.

Withdrawn from the merry throng, and standing together in the embrace of one of the deep windows, stood a young man and an exceedingly lovely girl.

In the dark eyes of the former there gleamed that tender light which the magic fire of love can alone kindle. "For some time the pair stood in silence, but at length the young man spoke thus:

"Oh! Rose, do you not love to hear the joyous chiming of the New Year's bells? They wake an echo in my heart; but oh! I long for still sweeter music, and the power to yield it lies in your own dear voice. I cannot leave you to-night until I have spoken of the love which is burning within my heart!

"I have long been aware of your devotion, and I have suffered your attentions because I have hitherto met with no suitor whom I could prefer to yourself. Still, I am very young, and I cannot as yet read my own heart. The lapse of time alone will show whether or not it has been yours to pluck the blossoms of my heart."

"Ah! dearest!" was the reply. "I would be content with a small share of affection at present, and trust to gaining more in the future, if you would but pledge yourself to me now."

"It cannot be!" was the reply. "It is better to make no vows, rather than to breathe those which may hereafter be broken."

"I will urge you no further," was the young man's rejoinder. "But if you cannot give yourself to me now, will you not promise that you will not pledge yourself to another before the New Year's chimes shall ring out at the expiration of another year? Believe me, mine is indeed a devoted love; do not cast it lightly away!"

"I am in my hurry to marry," was the laughing reply, "and I will not hesitate to give the promise, for I should be desirous of applying the test of a longer period than the time you name to any man before I promised to link my fate with his. But now, you must detain me no longer. I must hasten to apologize for having been so long absent from my father's guests."

"Stay!" cried the young man, "make me a more solemn promise than the one you have just given. Listen to the New Year's bells still ring forth—promise me by those dear—those sacred chimings—that you will hold yourself free for another year!"

"I promise, by the New Year's chimes!" said the young girl, with far more than her usual seriousness of manner, and Lionel Langford was content.

Rose Summers was the only daughter of a gentleman of considerable fortune, while Lionel Langford was a young man whose high natural gifts bore fair to secure him a position of some eminence in the legal profession, which he had but just entered.

As the young girl laid her head upon the pillow that night, she thought of the young lawyer with more tenderness than she had ever before felt. It was sweet to be beloved, although she knew not yet whether she should ever return his affection.

The time passed on, and the young people often met; but very seldom did Lionel refer to his love. His sense of honor was too keen. Rose had given him her promise to remain free, and he would not again urge his suit until the year of probation had expired.

And thus, ere half the year of probation had expired, she found herself looking forward to the end, that she might give to Lionel Langford that sweetest promise which his fond heart craved.

And as regarded Lionel himself, his love for Rose did but strengthen, for that could be, with the flight of time. In the busy whirl of life his thoughts would continually turn to her; she was the golden thread running through life's tissue.

The yellow fog of a cold November morning lay over the great city, as Lionel Langford partook of his solitary breakfast. His thoughts were of a pen- sive, yet somewhat hopeful character.

"My short life in London," he solilo- quized, "has been sufficient to show me, that with perseverance I shall eventually make a name. O! if I but knew that Rose would share it! But I will not be cast down, she knows that she is all the world to me; and surely she cannot always remain indifferent to that knowledge. Of her faithfully ob- serving her promise to me I have not the slightest doubt. The tone in which she repeated it the night before I quitted S— convinced me that she held it sacred."

Having taken off the edge of his appetite the young man addressed himself for a brief space to the morning papers. As his eye rapidly scanned the columns, it fell upon a familiar name, and in the record of marriages he read the following announcement:

November 1st, at the Parish Church of S—, by the Rev. R. Wil- ton, Herbert Lawton, to Rose, only daughter of J. Summers, Esq."

The paper fell from his hand, and his features were convulsed with emotion. "Fool that I was," he muttered, "to be beguiled by a beautiful face and a soft manner. I have heard that all women are alike, and that they cannot be trusted; but I had hoped that she, at least, could prove an exception! Her promise! Bah! it was but an idle breath; worse, she must have meant to deceive me when she gave it! I have often noticed Herbert Lawton's atten- tions to her; their little doubt that she had promised, or at least resolved to be his bride, on the night when she renewed her promise to me."

"Who can paint the wretchedness of the young man's mind! Life had lost all its brightness! At first he was tempted to relinquish the promise which had hitherto engrossed him, but soon he turned to them with renewed zeal, in order to distract his mind from the great sorrow which was oppressing it."

"I will spend my New Year in soli- tude here," he thought. "I will not revisit scenes the sight of which would only anguage my woe."

But as the weeks passed on, and the festive season grew yet more near, he changed his purpose, and resolved that on New Year's-eve he would take train for S—.

"I may have been too harsh in my judgment," he soliloquized. "Who knows what influences may have been brought to bear upon Rose in my ab- sence? I will see her, and from her own lips hear the story. She shall also learn that mine was no fleeting passion, but a love which still endures, even after desertion!"

Laurel House was again lighted up gaily, and once more a merry New Year's party was assembled within it. Within sight of the window at which he had spoken of love to Rose Summers a year ago walked Lionel Langford. Heedless of the biting cold, he still paced the gravel walk unnoticed by any. Something seemed to whisper to his heart that if he waited he should see the young girl at that very window; if that were so, he would hesitate no longer. He knew the way by which to reach the apartment, and, unknown to any, he would seek Rose Summers—or rather Rose Lawton.

The midnight hour tolled forth, and then the New Year's chimes rang out sweet and clear. How they smote upon Lionel's heart! And now a sweet face—fair as of old, but inexpressibly sad—appeared at the window on which the young man's gaze had so long been riveted.

Noislessly Lionel Langford sought the apartment; but on the threshold he paused, for unconsciously the fair Rose was breathing her thoughts aloud. "Would that Lionel were here!" she soliloquized. "What can keep him from me? I had thought to give him the still sweeter promise of which he spoke while the New Year's chimes were ringing!"

"Rose," cried a deep, sad voice, "you must be dreaming! How could you—the wife of another—give your- self to me?"

father's name is John, and my uncle's name is John; that will account for the initial 'J,' used in the announcement, being applicable to either."

"Oh, Rose!" cried Lionel Langford, "how grievously I have been deceived! But the mistake was natural, and you do not know what I have suffered. But oh! what joy it is to find that you have not proved faithless! And now tell me, can you give me the priceless treasure of your love?"

"I can, Lionel," replied the young girl. "I have learned to love you more than I had believed possible. I cannot tell you what I have suffered in your absence. When the bells began to ring, and you were not by my side, they seemed to sound the death knell of my fairest hopes. But now all is gladness. Hark! the bells are ringing still! Oh! Lionel, I give myself to you now and forever; and if you would have my words yet more sacred, I make this promise, as I did the other, which I have so faithfully kept, by the New Year's chimes."

Lionel Langford was more than content with his beloved one's promise, and ere the New Year's glory glistened rested upon the earth, the happy lovers had knelt in marriage vows. Fair and gentle children have since been given to them, and their lot is bright with all domestic joys. But though their lives are blissful and serene throughout the whole year, there is no season when they raise their hearts with such adoring gratitude to Heaven as when they stand together and listen to the music of the "New Year's Chimes!" S. A. S.

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