

WELCOME AND TO SCHOOL

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Taking Them Home.

A NEW YEAR'S SKETCH.

He chuckled, as he harnessed the horse, and was so happy over his own thoughts that he did not feel the cold.

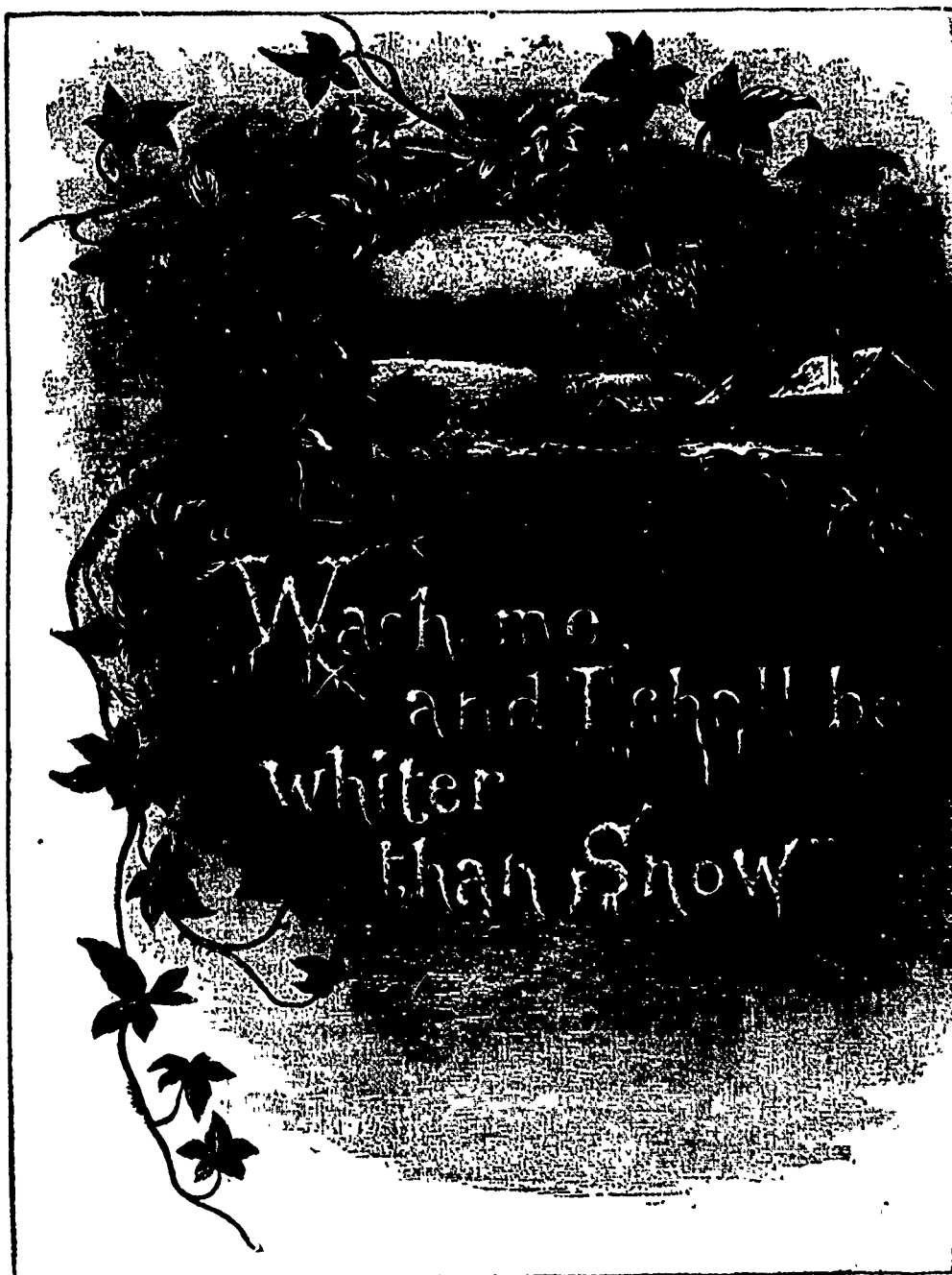
"Stand over!" he said to old Ned. "If you knew what you was going on, and was a horse of sense, you'd stand on two legs. It is the nicest job you've done this many a day. Oh, yes, pretty doves, you may well coo! You will have a friend to pet you, now. Ned, stand still! I'm in a hurry, and you mustn't fidget around so. Never mind if it is cold. Whoa, I say! It is New Year's, and you shall have an extra peck of oats to celebrate on as soon as we get home. There now, we're ready. Go ahead."

It was Ezra Thompson, the hired boy at Mr. Preston's, who was so full of talk this New Year morning. Something had happened that filled him with delight. To think, too, that it had all grown out of a remark that he made one morning when the family all came out to see the new kitchen and milk-room, and Mrs. Preston had said: "I wonder what we can do with that old milk-house now. It seems like a friend, it has served us so many years."

Ezra had served them for several years, and felt very much at home, so he spoke his thoughts. "It would

make a nice little house for somebody. Wish the widow Jones had it instead of that old shell she lives in."

That had actually been the beginning of it. He did not know Mrs. Preston heard him, for she turned toward the little house at the foot of the snowy lawn; and said not a word for at least five minutes; then she said: "I don't know but that is a good idea of yours, Ezra. I'll think about it."



A PRAYER FOR NEW YEAR.

Now, Mrs. Preston was one of those blessed women who always think to some purpose. That was three weeks ago. You should see the old house now! A partition had been made in it—making two of the cunningest rooms! The plain board walls had been covered all over with thick paper, and then with pretty wall-paper of a delicate tint. The floors had been covered with soft green and brown carpeting. In one corner stood a mite

they knew nothing about it!

Who was widow Jones? Well, she was just the nicest, neatest, most cheery old lady who was ever bent up with rheumatism, in this world. The Prestons knew her well. She had been a nurse in their family years before, and had come back, after a long absence, very poor, to suffer in the town where she used to be young and happy. If you could have seen the horrid little wretch of a stove

of a cook-stove, shining brightly, both with polish and the bright fire that glowed in it. A bit of a table was set for two; and Ezra knew, whether any one else did or not, that a lovely New Year's dinner was sizzling in the oven. The other side of that partition was a bedstead and a bed, spread in white, such as Ezra knew the widow Jones had never slept on in her life. An easy chair sat by the bed, and another larger one occupied the warmest corner of the other room.

These were only a few of the cheery and pretty things that had found their way from the Preston garret into the old milk-room. Besides, Ezra had amused himself evenings in putting up all sorts of conveniences, in the shape of cupboards and shelves and hooks and nails. He never had enjoyed anything in his life as much as he did the fixing up of the house.

All the Prestons had become interested, and helped as hard as they could. Bridget, in the Preston kitchen, was cooking the little turkey that was to furnish the widow Jones and her granddaughter with their first dinner in their new home.

Now the crowning joy was coming. Ezra and Ned were going after the victims of all this fun, and