

'That lad is likely to become not only a successful man, but a noble man as well. I wish we had more of his kind.'—'Junior C.E. World.'

Elsie's New Year.

(Howe Benning, in 'Advance'.)

'I wish I could live an entirely unselfish life on New Year's Day,' said Elsie Sheldon. 'I wish I could make of it a day full of thought for others, and with no thought for self. I believe that if I could it would influence every day of the year to come, and the seed planted might bring a rich harvest. I would like to make the first day of the year one that the Master would smile upon and approve.'

It had been a little hard for Elsie to say just this. It was never easy for her to speak out her real thought, and then, just beside her, sat Fannie Dewey, and Fannie had but recently returned from a fashionable boarding school, and, in point of style and dress and culture, was quite the admired of the village. Now, as Elsie sat down she could not avoid stealing a side glance at her neighbor. There was a bit of a smile on Fannie's lips, and Elsie fancied the curve was a little sarcastic.

'I cannot help it,' she thought. 'I suppose it seemed very small to her, but it seemed to be just what he wanted me to say,' sturdily, and then she forgot it.

New Year came on Wednesday, and on Tuesday night Elsie went to bed with her head full of plans. Some way her week of thought and prayer had seemed to bring her really but one idea and that was about the poor-house, standing a little beyond the village limits, where the town poor, about twenty or so, found a home that was decent, and that was all. She had heard of crippled Jim and blind Jane and Captain Tom, and many others. She had even waited at the gate, and looked with wondering interest at the many bare windows of the forlorn, dreary building. Now she longed to do something for its inmates. Her monthly allowance of two dollars would be paid her that morning. Her father had promised her the horse and cutter for a drive. Then, with the silver dollars changed into paper bags, containing treasures of fruits and nuts and simple candies, she could go abroad to the forlorn house carrying cheer and brightness. Surely God had given her that thought. It was so plain to her. For the early morning there were other ministries, and in a serene and peaceful state of mind she sank to slumber.

She awakened earlier than usual, with a sudden start, as though a piece of lead had fallen upon her forehead. She was restless and uncomfortable, too, and the lead seemed to be settling down as if to stay. She moved a little, and something seemed out of order below her throat. She raised her eyelids in the darkness, and several needles seemed to be stabbed into the balls. The clock below sounded, and she counted out six slow strokes. A rooster in the back yard set up a signal crow.

Yes, New Year had come, and it had brought to her one of her rare but exacting sick headaches. She knew what it meant: all day long in a darkened room; hours of severe sickness, of utter indifference to anything; then, creeping in

with the twilight, a blessed freedom from pain—and rest. But the day would be done; the day over which she had hoped and prayed, and it would be all lost to her.

'Lost,' she groaned to her pillow, 'and I thought God was giving me all my thought for it,' and the scalding tears would come, though every one cost the poor head a pang.

'And you can't go to Aunt Sadie's to dinner,' ten-year-old Benny wailed; 'ain't that dreadful!'

'Mother, you must go,' she exclaimed.

'What! and leave you? No, indeed,' mother replied.

But Elsie knew how the busy, overworked mother enjoyed these rare outings, and she insisted. 'I shall be over my worst and ready to sleep by two o'clock,' she said, 'and Nora is kind, so promise me to keep my head from worrying.'

The children were all at home and trying their lungs for the New Year, but, Elsie thought, 'I promised to be unselfish. God did not want me to be anywhere else, so I must practise here,' and she stuffed cotton in her ears and heard faintly.

The sickness had all gone in the time allotted, but Elsie feigned drowsiness when mother stooped for the good-bye, and then worried through the remaining hours of daylight as bravely as she could, often whispering to her sore heart some lines she had recently learned:

'He sends the disappointment? Well, then, take it from His hand,
Shall God's appointment seem less good than what thyself had planned?'

'But I cannot understand,' softly to herself.

The blessed twilight came at last, and with it sleep and ease. Mother looked in quietly, but the children remained at auntie's. By and by, mother came again.

'All right now, mamma.'

'Ready for a caller, dear?'

'Who?'

'Fannie Dewey wants to come in.'

'Oh, indeed, yes! Give me my pink sack, please. I am so glad.'

So Fannie, in her dainty wool and rich furs, made a pretty picture for the tired eyes to greet, but even then she did not see all the blessing.

'And you, poor dear, you have been just lying here all day and suffering, while I have been having such a good time, living out your day, as I called it,' Fannie said after a little.

'Why, what do you mean?'

'Don't you remember telling us last Sunday evening what kind of a day you meant to make of this?'

'Yes, but—'

'And I thought it was such a lovely plan, and all day I have been trying to make it unselfish and full of joy for others; and, Elsie, I wanted to come and tell you to-night that it has been the happiest day I ever had in my life, and to thank you for it.'

'Oh, Fannie!'

'I know my right hand ought not to know,' the girl went on, 'but, you see, really, this was your right hand, so we will talk it over. You know Jack Dempsey, how long he has been sick with rheumatism. I thought of him, and after breakfast I carried him a basket of grapes and

oranges. Oh, how poor the family are! And he seemed to think they would taste good. On my way back I passed old Mrs. Brown's—that blind lady on Union street. Her husband was a minister, you know. And I ran in to see her. She is well cared for, but her niece is a teacher and gone all day, so she hears little reading, so I stayed two hours and read 'Enoch Arden' through to her, and that old lady found wonderful things between the lines, so I got far the most from that.'

'Our dinner was at one o'clock, and papa said then that I could have the horses and two-seated sleigh and Dick for the afternoon.'

'"Whom will you take?"' asked mamma. I surprised her by saying I would like to take some people that did not get rides often.

'"Better go to the poor-house, then,"' said papa, in that queer way of his.

'And Elsie, I did just that. Why, Elsie, how your eyes shine! Are you glad? I went three times. My first load was blind Jane and Fatty, and old Mrs. Crow, and that dear, patient Hulda that used to be a nurse, you know. How she did enjoy it! I gave them all a whirl about town, to see the shop windows and the people, and I think that everybody I knew in town was out. I let Jane out at the church where they were practising on the organ, and called for her next trip, and she said she had got something that would last her all the year. Oh, I had a lovely time, and all thanks to you, you darling! I never should have thought of it myself. Now I must go. We are going to have company this evening.'

She was gone. The day was gone, too; but Elsie lay in the firelight and happy smiles chased away the tears of joy.

'For, after all,' she whispered, 'He did hear me. Now I know how wise he is, for it has been not only for one but for two, such a happy New Year.'

Sheaves Waiting to be Garnered.

Walking along the street one morning, I saw a lady, a member of my church, just leaving her house, and I supposed that she would probably be absent half an hour or more—long enough for me to accomplish what I had often desired. She was a very young woman, a member of her family, who was very beautiful and reputed to be quite gay, to whom I had sometimes spoken of religion, but I had never found any opportunity to speak to her 'alone.' I had thought that she was embarrassed and somewhat confused by the presence of this lady, whenever I had mentioned the subject of religion to her, and therefore I was glad to seize this opportunity to see her alone—such an opportunity as I thought the lady indisposed to furnish me.

I rang the bell, and the young woman soon met me in the parlor. I then felt some little embarrassment myself, for I had rushed into this enterprise through an unexpected occurrence and without much premeditation of the manner in which it would be most wise for me to proceed. I expected a cold reception, if not a repulse. I deemed her a very careless, volatile girl. I thought she would be unwilling to have me urge the claims of religion upon her, and the idea that much depended upon the manner in which