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THE FIRST NEW YEAR'S CALL.

At the first peep of dawn, Nellie's bright eyes woke out of her quiet sleep, and remembering a scheme she had planned the evening before, when the custom of New Year's visits was the topic of conversation, aroused her little sister, and said, "It is New Year's, Bessie, wouldn't it be fun to pay papa and mamma a New Year's visit?"

Bessie opened her eyes, closed and rubbed them, yawned, and then went off to sleep again.

"It's New Year's, Bessie. Won't you visit mamma, as all the big folks do?" said Nellie, who gave her sister a gentle tap on the cheek; called her ear gently, and just twitched her nose.

Bessie woke at this, and, although not entirely a stranger to her elder sister's freaks, asked what she wanted. The scheme of a New Year's visit was explained, and Bessie entered into it heartily. The two children then went to curly-headed Fred's cot and after admitting him into the secret, all started on their journey through the passage to the paternal chamber.

It would take a volume to describe the adventures and errors of that journey. First the greatest anxiety was occasioned by the thought that nurse might awake and spoil their plan; that trouble escaped, they were almost "frightened out of their wits" by the cat running past them—her mew sounded to them like a lion's roar. After that their pet dog, who had been sleeping on the rug, was aroused and commenced gambolling around. What Freddy took it for, is hard to say; but he clasped his sister tightly and said that he didn't want to make a New Year's call on mamma, and entreated her to go back. But she didn't intend to do that, and pursued her course. It was quite light when they reached their journey's end, and as soon as they tapped at the door Freddy's face unclouded and was in turn



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covered with bright smiles. his sisters also were in the best of spirits and ripe for any prank.

"Who is that in the hall?" said mamma to papa.

"I don't know; it sounds as if some one was coming this way," answered papa.

"Dear me, I believe it's the children," said the mother. "What prank are they up to now?"

The knock at the door sounded, and the conspirators entered: Freddy first bearing a sprig of the Christmas mistletoe Bessie next, and last of all the arch conspirator.

"We want some cake and wine," said Nellie, "like you give to other visitors on New Year's."

"Cake and wine," repeated Freddie.

Mr. and Mrs. Arnold were not people who in any way sympathized with the drinkings of society, but, once a year, in compliance with a fashion which is rapidly becoming unpopular, they offered their guests wine. The effect that this might have on their children they did not consider; and forgot that by the careful treasury of the bottle and its production only on this day when they would begin the year with the kindest feelings and best wishes to friends, their children might grow to consider it as one of those precious things most to be desired, and to be enjoyed when men and women. Whether such is the result of the practice or not, this thought rushed into the minds of both parents at the same time on Freddie's request for cake and wine, and the mother answered quickly, as if perceiving at one glance the ruin caused in many precious children through the habit of wine-drinking.

"No wine any more, children."

"Thank you, Maria," said the father. "That is the proper course; we should have taken it long ago."

And so there was no wine presented to visitors that day but a nice cup of tea, coffee or chocolate was tendered and accepted with thanks, and visitors said that they were glad that Mr. and Mrs. Arnold's whole influence was to be cast on the side of those who in no way encouraged the use of wine.

The result of that little visit who can tell? Will all our MESSENGER friends use their full influence against that whose use causes only sorrow, woe, babbling, wounds without cause, death and destruction.

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