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A Happy New Year

"A guide New Year to ane an' a', and' mony may ye see." So sang the modern ancients. But those were the days when "Old Highland" was sixpence a gallon (generous); when dope was but a diamond in the rough; and Boston had not yet vanquished the sphinx. But in our days of unstinted civilisation the gay and festive season is garlanded with other aspirations. Its form delighteth the eye, in the same way as a tombstone gladdeneth the heart. The heraldry of the prophets has given way to the profits of "heraldry" and the "good will" that was once cordial with a "dram" is now unctuous with a suggestion.

At this joyous season, that "nobleman of nature," the freeborn plug, pleasantly travelling to and fro over our charming earth contrives to return quite ostentatiously to the bosom of his family, yea to the sanctuary of his indefeasible hearth, there to enjoy the worshipful season in the sweet tranquillities of peace. Being of a fervent spirit his mind is calm in the quietude of content. And having been diligent in his industry, waiting—obediently as becometh the lowly—with respectful patience on the will of his appointed master, and being frugal withal, he hath garnered to himself plenteous stores of "good"; and amassed much treasure whereof no moth may ravish and none covet.

So he hasteneth to his castellated house, where none may despoil him or any make him afraid. His coming maketh his household glad. For they have been forward in the garnishings of festivity, waiting the feasting but for him who cometh with great reward and whose diligence is mightily esteemed. He rejoiceth in his little flock; yea he maketh merry, with his comely little ones; it maketh his heart glad that they are comely and fair to behold. And having performed his ablutions—as is the formality of his custom at this season—and arranged him in grateful raiment, he sitteth down, even he and his little ones, at the laden tables of his riches. And as he surveys the snowy board with its polished ware and glittering number, its sparkling crystal, its bowered decorations, its choice and tempting viands, its rich and varied vintage, his heart filleth with gratitude to the great giver of all good, who hath manifested himself so wondrously and rewarded the laborer so abundantly.

Having feasted and made merry for a space, dispoiling the "crackers" of profit with the bon mots of obsolete yesterday and the yet more obsolete tomorrow, and delighted the young shoots with the multitude of toyland, he giveth himself up to seemly and profitable meditation. He observed how cunningly the earth was devised for the habitation of man; and how nothing befell contrary to his great good. Even those visitations, which in uncharitable moments were spoken of as calamities, were but the chastenings of affection. For if the master called some home unto greater glory, did he not inspire others thither in their stead? And did not those very manifestations open up new and wondrously savory opportunities for the further achievements of man? He remarked how all men were of a common indulgence. He saw that as the good father had prospered him he prospered all who had been diligent in endeavor and of a contrite countenance. He perceived how swiftly corruption and contumely had been humbled and dismayed, and rancorous disobedience to appointed authority brought to naught. And he was conscious of the amplitude of infinite

wisdom, that to the uttermost ends of the earth attested the ancient verity that "never will the seed of the righteous beg for bread." O, the wonder of abiding omnipotence.

He was comforted, as with balm of Gilead, to reflect that amidst the multifarious duties of life righteousness increased her borders and yielded succor and pleasantness to the heart. Meditating reminiscently on his fruitful journeyings through the inspiring marts of fame he was magnificently impressed with the devout fervor of common life. He remembered sweetly the guileless faith that "felt the guiding hand" in the sore days of trial and adversity; and the unrestrained acclamations of those whose secret prayers had prospered even their carnal expectations. He remembered those—a mighty multitude—who having bathed in the ruddy tides of salvation, had come forth white and shining, even militant with humility. Others again he knew, had been mightily purged from disease and affliction, merely by gazing upon the holy man, lo, even a Yogi from the land of the great Freedom. Abundant as the hosts of heaven were those who had been born again, and had acquired a new heart. Even it was said—and witnessed by the holy eyes of faith—that some, by an especial act of mercy, had inherited a new leg, even a new kidney, and whose ears had been restored to the normal proportions of the field. Once he had questioned why faith had never been vouchsafed a new head. But it had been startlingly revealed to him in a vision of the night, how little occasion the godly have for a helmet. Everywhere he looked, life was honeycombed with the sentiment of religion. He had heard a peasant from the hinterland affirm by the "treed coon" (one of those loving allusions to the cross, so indicative of intimate communion with the spiritual), that the country was "going to glory." He had listened to a carpenter proudly declare to his master, by the "spiked Jese" (another of those tender touches of divinity), that his work "was as square as the mansions of heaven." He knew any number of saintly men of business who had become affluent by selling their merchandise in the stoke-room of a liner, who habitually testified to their credibility by the "smoking ransom" and "the flying hammers of hell." He knew one who had acquired a competence as an artist in a gravel-pit (and who attributed his success to divine protection), who invariably accredited his statement "by the bearded ghost of grace." And he had overheard, but recently, a doughty woodsman testify to a comrade "by the branching buds of Lucifer" that this story was "the sacred truth of God." (He was quite at a loss to appreciate the symbolism of this spiritual outpouring, but undoubtedly it emanated from an unusually deep spring of holiness.) Even the most apathetic seldom engaged in a matter without the most solemn oaths to God, and even in the trivial affairs of life they constantly appealed to the crucified Christ to witness their asseverations.

In every walk of life this integrity of holiness prevailed. Men of probity struggled with the "demon rum," or the "drug fiend," to preserve the immortal souls of the people. Corporations, knowing the evil of money, strove with unceasing ardor to keep the people from its corroding touch. Governments, perceiving the tyranny of the "mailed fist," and violent dictatorships, admonished the multitude against the blandishments of organisation. Tariffs

were manipulated to lighten the trials of daily life. Indigence was solaced with comely pensions. Industries were regulated nicely to the necessities of the people. Labor was adjusted by the sliding scale, lest the bounteous standards of life should be imperilled. The most meticulous care was exercised in the operation of industry, lest life and limb be endangered. Beautifully computed structures were erected for the worthy co-partners of capital. Shipping was regulated, lest men should perish in the hungry sea. Freight commissions pleaded with penurious railroads for the rights of the public. Food laws were enacted, lest the unscrupulous should vitiate the tabernacle of clay. Even enactments on speech and thought, so that man might not be tempted unknowingly to evil, and contaminated by iniquity. Here or there throughout the world the kindly master forbids eager man to work, fearing he may become exhausted through over exertion. Anon he wisely urges him to toil, that the times and the seasons may be made worthy of the Merer. And over it all the sweet councils of fraternity and the dispassionate justice of equality, safeguarding to all, without respect of persons, the common rights of prosperity and life.

In the anointed courts of state, whose watchword was, "God and right," he saw the flower of manhood, battling with ancient tyranny for the rights of man and nation, and who esteemed justice and honor of infinitely greater value than life itself. For the perpetuation of truth and liberty he saw whole kingdoms surrender their dearest possessions. He observed the great leaders of men tempted like the man of Uz by a polyglot devil now speaking in the barbarous gutters of Deutch or Slav, or anon using the flowery culture of modern Gaul. But, sustained by high conscience, inflexible honesty and resolute will, always they put the evil thing behind them, to beguile their enemies. He was lost in admiration for the altruistic self sacrifice of the mighty captains of industry, who unflinchingly bore the burden of giant armaments for the preservation of the sacred peace; who formulated international leagues, lest eternal freedom be overwhelmed; and who sought in the exalted spirit of God-fearing humanitarianism to convey and implant the sublime message of civilisation to distant and downtrodden lands and peoples. And above them all, beautiful in life and purpose, those Christly ministers of love, who had been esteemed stewards of many talents. By prodigious labor, unremitting thrift and superhuman intelligence, their talents had multiplied exceedingly. And now they stood ready, eager, nay accounted it an honor to the glory of the master to lend, upon condign considerations, to worthy and properly constituted people the last of their substance, to save humanity from ruin and extinction.

But it would be impossible to narrate the heroic epic of king and state and noble, for the continuing beatitude of human kind. Not to mention those, romantic, charming, unmistrusting, long distance followers of the spontaneous Jehovah and his parthenogenic son, who, by song and story, by screen and show, sometimes by dance and revelry, occasionally with bread and wine, seek to enfold the dear people in the undoubted "spirituality" of a "providence" undeniably "divine," and to confess them in a "civilisation" whose "goodwill" is as abundant

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