

'Clara! What has happened down here? Has the range given out? Where's supper?'

No reply came. He hurried upstairs, breathing heavily.

'Clara, what's the matter?'

Mrs. Hamilton turned a page and read with absorbed attention.

'Clara!' shouted her husband from the doorway.

She looked at him for a moment.

'Not so loud, please!' she said, returning to her book.

'What's the matter? Clara, I say, what has happened to the range?'

Mrs. Hamilton turned another page.

A sudden fear seized upon her husband. Insanity! She had lost her senses!

He stole softly across the carpet and grasped the book she held.

'Don't!' she said. 'Pray go away. You are interrupting me.'

'Clara! Are you sick, or are you crazy?'

'Sick? No. Go away, do. I am so interested.'

Her tone was natural. Mr. Hamilton discarded his momentary theory of insanity. His voice became more imperative.

'It is supper time! Where are the children? Where is the supper?' Clara, loudly, where is the supper?'

Mrs. Hamilton partially closed her book and looked at him.

'The supper? You said the supper?'

'I did!'

'Well,' yawning, 'I suppose it is getting late, but I must finish this book. I don't care about food, but I do want to know who succeeded to the throne after—'

'The throne be hanged!' interrupted Mr. Hamilton. 'Where are the children?'

'The children? Let me see. Oh, I remember! You'll find them at your sisters. I—'

'At Helen's? Why in time did you send them there?'

Mrs. Hamilton resumed her reading. 'Four days for housekeeping, two for my reading,' she said, quietly.

Mr. Hamilton stared at her for a moment. Then he burst into a hearty laugh.

'I see! I understand!' he said.

He left the room still laughing. He whistled as he went to the kitchen.

In a few moments his wife joined him.

'I'll see to things down here, while you go for the children,' she said; 'but, William, before you go, tell me this—Is it possible for a woman to keep up her education while she is doing housework, mending, sewing, receiving callers, and making calls, etc.?''

'I was a brute that night, Clara. You know more than most women do.'

'No,' sadly, 'I have not kept up as I should. But I mean to, William. The children must wear plainer clothing, and so must their mother, for their mother must not be an ignoramus.'

'And their father must not require such a vast amount of cooking as he has in the past. He must be content with simple meals.'

'The cooking is more important than the frills, the latest sleeves, etc. The time for reading must be taken from the unimportant matters.'

Mr. Hamilton thought with a keen regret of the work he had so often thoughtlessly made for the patient woman who stood beside him. He stooped and kissed her with a tenderness which brought quick tears to her eyes.

'Two heads are better than one. We'll talk it over by and by. In the meantime, help me to begin the New Year well by giving me bread and milk to-night. The children will like it, and so will their father.'

Mr. Hamilton went after the children presently. As he passed a church he saw a multitude of people entering it.

'The old year out—the new year in!' he thought.

He walked on with new purposes forming in his mind. The new year should be different from the old—there should be more time found for the enjoyment of life. Things should be made easier for his wife; they would make life higher and holier. It should be a new year—a year of love to God and love to man.

He spoke of these thoughts, that were stirring him so strangely, that evening. He was alone with his wife. She listened with sympathetic interest. She said little, but her few words satisfied and cheered him.

He arose and stood by the window when the clocks rang out the year. Soon the worshippers in the church filled the streets. Something of the solemnity of the hour passed from them to him. He looked up into the deep mysterious realm of starry space, and a strange new sense of companionship came to him. He found himself repeating words long half-forgotten: 'If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee. The Lord is thy keeper.'

Presently the sound of footsteps in the street died away. All was still again.

'The old year out! The new year in!' he said. 'Thank God for the desire to make it a better year!'

His heart was full as he turned away from the window.

'The old year gone! Gone with its burden of selfishness and thoughtlessness! The new year here! What will it be?'

The vision of the past grieved him sorely, but again he was comforted. 'The Lord is thy keeper. He that keepeth thee will not slumber.'

'Hail and Farewell.'

Good-bye, kind year! we walk no more together,

But here in quiet happiness we part;
And from thy wealth of faded fern and heather,

I take some sprays and wear them on my heart.

Good-bye, Old Year! with words of grace,
Leave us to him who takes thy place;
And say, Old Year, unto the New,
Kindly, carefully, carry them through,
For much, I ween, they have yet to do!

So the tale of the months is told,
Ever new and ever old,
Ever sad and ever gay,
As the years go on their way.
With a smile and with a tear,
Cometh, goeth, each New Year

Sample Copies.

Any subscriber who would like to have specimen copies of the 'Northern Messenger' sent to friends can send the names with addresses and we will be pleased to supply them, free of cost.

Miss Delinda's Thimble-Finger.

(Susan Teall Perry, in the 'Christian Intelligencer'.)

Chloe Bradley was standing on a kitchen chair tying up the morning glory vines. There was a bright look on her face as she looked at the artistic arrangement she had given them as they gracefully twined in and out of the lattice in front of the porch. It was early in the morning and the pretty flowers of various colors had just opened to the new sunshine.

'Is that you, Chloe, up among them vines?' called out a rough voice.

'Yes, here I am,' Chloe replied, jumping down from the chair. 'Good morning, Mr. Barton. Is it not a perfect morning?'

'It couldn't be beat,' said the farmer, as he stepped on to the porch. 'Miss Delindy wanted me to stop on my way to the grist mill and tell you that she's got a felon on her thimble-finger and she can't finish your dress as she agreed to. She feels awful bad about it, because she knows you've jest set on having it to go to the seashore with when your school closes. Felons are pesky things, Chloe, and no mistake. She hain't slept a minute for three nights and days, and she says she's jest as nervous as a witch.'

Chloe Bradley's face had a look of utter disappointment on it, as she said, 'O dear me, what made her get a felon on her finger now when I want that new dress so much. Of course I can't go a step now, and I had planned to have such a good time. There is no one else to make that dress anywhere about, that I know of. Just my luck.' Mr. Barton's team were getting restless and he jumped on to his grist bags and drove off.

'I'm just as provoked as I can be,' the young girl said, as she encountered her grandmother coming out of the kitchen door with a lunch box in her hand which she handed to Chloe. 'Miss Delinda has had to go to work and get a felon on her thimble-finger just as I am going away and want my new dress finished. It's a perfect shame.'

'Why, Chloe Bradley, how you do talk. The poor thing, how I pity her. If you ever had a felon you would know how to be sorry for her. You talk as if she had that felon on purpose. It is a quarter of nine o'clock and you'll have to hurry off to school or you will be late.'

It was the last week of school, and the next week after vacation began Chloe was going to the seashore with some friends who had kindly invited her to be of their party. Chloe had had but few outings in her life; she had always lived in the small inland village which only boasted of one store, post-office, school building and two churches. The invitation to see something of the outside world was a great event in Chloe's young life, and necessitated the getting of a new dress which she and her grandmother went to the county town to select. This was quite an event in her life, too, and she was very proud and happy when she took the material and the trimmings to the one dressmaker in the village. 'It's a fine piece and the color will wear well,' Miss Delinda said, as she ran her thin fingers over the smooth woolen goods. 'It will become you, Chloe. I'll make it up real nice.'

She had told the school girls what Miss Delinda had said, and closed by saying,