

A NEW YEAR RESOLUTION

By Mary L. Wilkins

MY brother Lemuel married Mehitable Pierce when he was quite along in years. Nobody thought he'd ever get married at all, any more'n my brother Reuben and Silas. The three had lived together and kept bachelors' hall ever since our mother died. I was married and away from home long before she died. I didn't know how they would get along at first but all of the boys had been used to helpin' ma a good deal, and they were real handy, and when I asked if they wasn't goin' to have a house-keeper, they wouldn't hear to it. They said they wasn't goin' to have no strange woman round in ma's place, nohow. So Silas he took hold and did the washin' and ironin', and Reuben did the sweepin', and Lemuel, he was the youngest, next to me, did the cookin'. He could cook a dinner equal to any woman, and his pies beat mine. My husband said so, and I had to give in they did.

Well, they seemed to get along so nice, and none of 'em had ever seemed to think much about the girls, not even when they was boys, that I must say I was astonished when Lemuel he up and got married to Mehitable Pierce. She was a little along in years, too, rather more so than Lemuel, and a dreadful smart piece. She was good lookin' and she had property, but she was dreadful smart and up an' comin'. I could never see how Lemuel ever got the courage to ask her to have him, he was always a kind of mild spoken little fellow. Reuben he declared he didn't. He vowed that Mehitable asked him herself. He said he knew it for a fact, and he said it with the tears rollin' down his cheeks. Reuben was the oldest and he'd always been terrible fond of Lemuel. "That poor boy would never have got in such a fix if that woman hadn't up an' asked him, an' he didn't have spunk enough to say no," said Reuben, and he swallowed hard.

Mehitable had a nice house of her own that her father left her, all furnished and everything, so of course Lemuel he went to live with her, and Mehitable's house was pretty near where I lived, so I could see everything that was goin' on. It wasn't very long before I said to Hannah Morse, my husband's old maid sister that lives with us and teaches school, that I believed Lemuel was henpecked, though I hadn't anything against Mehitable.

"I don't see what else anybody that married Mehitable Pierce would expect," said Hannah. She spoke real sharp for her. I've always kind of wondered if Hannah would have had Lemuel if he'd asked her. "Well," said I, "I hope poor Lemuel will be happy. He's always been such a good, mild, willin' boy that it does seem a pity for him to be rode over rough-shod, and have all the will he ever did have trodden into the dust."

"Well, that is what will happen, or I'll miss my guess," said Hannah Morse. For a long while I thought she was right. It was really pitiful to see Lemuel. He didn't have no more liberty nor will of his own than a five-year-old boy, and not so much. Mehitable wouldn't let him do this and that, and if there was anythin' he wanted to do, she was set against it, and he'd always give right in. Many's the time Lemuel has run over to my house, and his wife come racin' to the fence and screamed after him to come home, and he'd start up as scared as he could be. And many's the time I've been in here, and he started to go out, and she'd tell him to set down, and he's set without a murmur.

Mehitable she bought all his clothes, an' she favored long-tailed coats, and to bein' such a short man never ooked well in 'em, and she wouldn't let him have store shirts and collars, but made them herself, and she didn't jave very good patterns, she used her father's old ones, and he wasn't no such built man as Lemuel, and I know he suffered everything, both in his pride an' his feelin's. Lemuel began to look real down-trod. He didn't seem to look half such a man as he did, and the poorest thing about it was: Mehitable didn't 'pear to like the work of her own hands, so to speak.

One day she talked to me about it. "I dunno what 'is," said she, "but Lemuel he don't seem to have no go ahead and no ambition and no will of his own. He tries to please me, but it don't seem as if he had grit enough to stand for that. Sometimes I think he ain't well, but I dunno what ails him. I've been real careful of him. He's worn thick flannels, and he's had wholesome victuals; I ain't never see him have pie."

"Lemuel was always dreadful fond of pie," said I. "I got kind of worried," said she, "because he'd never had a pie since he was a boy, and I thought he'd be starved to death."

"I love it," said Lemuel, "and I wanted to make some more, but I was we're first married, but I was real round makin' pie, and I wasn't goin' to have him eat of 'em after they were made. Pies ain't good for him. But I declare I dunno what does make him act so kind of spiritless. I told him today I thought he'd better make a resolution for the New Year and stick to it, and see if it wouldn't put some spunk into him."

Pretty soon she went home. I could see she was real kind of troubled. She always did think a good deal of Lemuel in spite of everything.

The next day was New Year's, and in the afternoon Mehitable came in again. She didn't have her sewin' as she generally did, she was a very industrious woman. She jest sat down, and begun twistin' the fringe of her shawl as if she was real nervous. Her face was puckered up, too. "I dunno what to make of Lemuel," said she, "anally."

"Why, what's the matter?" said I, kind of scared.

"He says he's made a resolution for the New Year," said she, "and that he's goin' to keep it."

"Well, what 'is it?" said I.

"I dunno," said she.

"Well, if it's a good one, you don't care, do you?" said I, "and it couldn't be anythin' but a good one if my brother made it."

"I dunno what it is," said she.

"Well, he tell?"

"No, he won't. I can't get a word out of him about it. He don't let like himself."

Well, I must say I never saw such a change as come over Mehitable and Lemuel after that. He wouldn't tell what his resolution was, and she couldn't make him, though she almost went down on her knees. It began to seem as if she was fairly changin' characters with Lemuel, though she had a spell of bein' herself more'n ever at first, tryin' to force him to tell what that resolution was. Then she give that up, and she never asked him where he was goin', an' he could come in my house an' sit jest as long as he wanted to, and she bought him a short-tailed coat and some store collars and shirts, and he looked like another man. He got to stayin' down to the store nights, an' talkin' politics



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with the other men real loud. I heard him myself one night, and I couldn't believe it was Lemuel.

Well, Lemuel he never gave in, and he never told till the next New Year's day, when he said he would. He'd said all along that he'd tell her then, I'd got most as curious as Mehitable myself by that time, and New Year's mornin' I run over real early, they wasn't through breakfast, I kn w the minute I saw them that he hadn't told. He said he wouldn't till he was through his breakfast. He was most through—was finishin' up with a big piece of mince pie, and he'd made it himself, too. When he'd swallowed the last mouthful, he looked up and he laughed, real pleasant and sweet, and yet with more manliness than I'd ever seen in him.

"S'pose you want to know what that New Year's resolution was?" said Lemuel.

"I guess I can stand it a while longer," said Mehitable. Now the time had come she didn't want to act too eager, but I showed out jest what I felt.

"For the land sake, Lemuel Babbit, what was it?" said I.

Lemuel he laughed again. "Well, it wasn't much of anythin'," he said, in his gentle drawlin' way. "I didn't make no resolution, really."

"What, Lemuel Babbit!" cried Mehitable.

"No," said he; "I couldn't think of none to make, so I made a resolution not to tell that I hadn't made any."



Backward Look

By Wilbur D. Nesbit

"Add ye year to year." — Isaiah xxxiv, 1.

So goes the old year forth, as goes
A king with no attending train,
As goes a monarch old, who knows
His further effort is in vain.
In stately sequence they have gone—
The gouttier months—and now, alone,
The old year proudly falters on,
The new year comes to claim his throne.

But we that stand as subjects stand
Within the temple of the years
While faints the narrow thread of sand
That in the timeglass now appears—
Should we look out, down the way
Whereon our eager feet would fare,
Or should we gaze at yesterday
And see what is recorded there?

Aye, backward then a moment's space—
Look backward at the dimming hills
As you old time with gentle grace
With drifting haze the distance fills;
Count now the heights which held the goals
Which had been ours to win and keep,
Save that we in our shrinking souls
Fared that the climb was long and steep.

Now the horizon whence we wend
Seems but a path all smooth and fair
Where frowning hill and valley blend,
And airy load were light to bear.
Could we go back! Ah, might we go
Once more upon the dwindling way!
The trials would not fret us so—
The trifles, now, of yesterday.

So, in the temple of the years
We gaze back at the fading view—
The composite of laughs and tears—
Then turn to face the roadway new,
As the new year comes, as comes a king,
Apparelled in rich stuffs and gold—
That unto it we may bring
The good we garnered from the old.



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HEROES OF COMMONPLACE

They are the Ones Who Fill Chinks of Life and Shut Out Chilly World.

To you who have achieved, many will wish a Happy New Year. For you who are facing success on a steady upward path, you who are warmed by the sunshine of human interest and strong with the joy of life, a Happy New Year is all but assured. To you who face a life crisis with the prosperous outlook of success beyond, to you in whom hope has absolute determination even in the presence of the fiercest obstacles, the New Year promises well. To you others whom the angel of grief through the passing years has folded in so close an embrace that your eyes have not caught the gleam of his wings or know that they were blessed, the year will bring a tender ministrations that is Time's own privilege. But what hope is there for each in that great army of the unknown heroes who face no bracing ordeal nor promise of physical or moral cheer; who with faces set toward tomorrow see no light, no warmth, but the same pitiless world that has been their lot for years? And yet these smile brightly. They are the ones who fill the chinks of life and shut out for us an often chilly world; they are the apostles of the little things, the despised things, whose sacrifices we accept with as slight thought as we bestow on the things themselves. Yet are they the links which hold the world together.—Collier's Weekly.

New Year's Gifts.

The New Year's gift no doubt originated with the Romans, for with them giving and taking was carried to such an extravagant degree during all the 35 days of the year that Emperor Claudius prohibited the demanding of presents except on New Year's day; but the practice continued for many years. In Scotland and Scotland the ancient century customs are numerous, and many of them are strangely retained. In Scotland it was perfectly allowable to ask for a New Year's gift, and Henry the Third is said to have presented presents in plate and gold to his nobles; while Queen Elizabeth and Henry the Fourth presented presents to their nobles. In France the custom was similar. In the United States the custom of giving presents on New Year's day is still very common. It is said that the custom of giving presents on New Year's day is still very common.

A BAD BEGINNING.



"Gee! I'm almost sorry I done resolved to play hockey every day this year."

New Year's in the Far East.

In Japan the New Year is welcomed with far more energy than in this country. Let a man's energy be ever so defective, he is expected to rise at 4 a. m. and don new clothes to meet the auspicious morning. Then, with his gala garments in due order, he worships the gods, performs obeisance to the spirits of his ancestors, and pays homage to all relations older than himself. No ordinary viands are consumed at breakfast. The tea must be made from water drawn from the well as the first ray of the New Year's sun strikes it. On every table figures a red lacquer tray, covered with evergreen leaves, and supporting a rice dumpling, a lobster, orange, persimmons, chestnuts, dried sardines and herring roe; all these dishes possessing an allegorical significance. This meal is the start of the festivities, which are continued for 15 days, business being almost entirely suspended for the first week of the year.

Forming Resolutions.

New Year wishes shatter of the good resolutions of the past. Ah! these "what might have been" are words of mental anguish. Don't let the first year of the year begin with one such resolution. Make lists of all wishes, and having made them, let's think to them, and when they come to pass, let's give them a good send-off. Don't let the first year of the year begin with one such resolution.

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A New Leaf and A New Year's Resolution

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