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WIDOW DRAKE'S BEAU.

Why He Looks Forward Impatiently to New Year's Day.

"WELL!" said the hired girl, as she took a clothespin from her mouth and carefully fastened a pair of trousers of ancient cut and ample proportions to the clothesline, "when it comes to widows, I own 'em to be beyond my understandin'. What Mrs. Drake can see in that there furrin-spoakin' westerner I can't see. But there's no question but what the weddin's to come off sometime soon, an' her tellin' me to fetch these here clo'se that belonged to number one out an' air 'em is to my mind a sure sign she's goin' to dispose of 'em an' get 'em out the way before number two comes along.

"Her first's been under the sod these ten year an' she's mourned him long enough, the land knows. I nin't in no way against widows marryin' an' tryin' it again if they like; but I do say it 'ud be more seemly to choose a man o' her own Yankee stock than one o' frog-eatin' French descent."

And the hired girl gave the vest which she was shaking a jerk which sent one of the buttons half-way across the yard.

It certainly did look as though there was to be a wedding at Widow Drake's before long, and the neighbors whispered that there was a little romance connected with it. And so there was, but they never could have guessed what it was about, neither could you if you were to try for a month—so I am going to tell you all about it.

The Widow Drake was plump, well-preserved little body, with fresh rosy cheeks and bright blue eyes and the smoothest of brown hair without a thread of silver in it. She was not young, but nobody would have guessed that she was forty, and as a woman is only as old as she looks, she kept her own counsel and let people speak of her as being thirty-five.

Her husband had left her a neat little home and enough money to keep her comfortably without any care beyond a few little economies now and then, in the shape of a dyed gown or a reconstructed bonnet.

Her life was calm and uneventful; too uneventful, by half, she thought, as she sat in the twilight stroking the great Maltese cat which was her companion and confidant.

Priscilla, the maid of all work, was a woman of too mature an age to be called a girl in any other sense than a "hired girl," and she chose that title of her own free will. She had lived with Mrs. Drake during her brief married life, and the widow had kept her ever since because she dreaded being alone in the house. But Priscilla was neither sympathetic nor responsive, and Tom, the Maltese cat, was much more apt to agree with the widow's opinions, so it

TOM PURRED HIS APPROVAL.

was to him that she whispered, upon this evening in June, that she had half a mind to go west and take up a claim.

And Tom purred his approval and the widow went on and poured into his ear a scheme which had been working in her mind for several days.

Of course every one said that she must be crazy. Odd, over-thrifty and venturesome were the mildest of the adjectives which were applied to this harmless little woman, who was simply tired of the dull life which she was living and who knew of no other way of making a change which would benefit her health and mind and her purse as well.

And that is how it happened that this woman, who seemed far too dainty for such a life, was living away out on a Dakota claim, in a snug little shanty of pine boards, banked with sods, and in the midst of the crudest of surroundings.

It was the first of July when she filed her claim and it was required that there should be a six months' residence upon it. Everybody said that she never would stay half the time; but she smiled and stroked old Tom.

It wasn't so bad, after all, she thought. There were plenty of neighbors—not very near, to be sure—but half a mile seems so much nearer in that clear atmosphere which transmits light and sound so marvelously.

Each morning she heard the shrill vocal salute of the two schoolma'ams who lived on the claim next hers; and from her own door she would call back a hearty "halloo-o," which always brought a smile to the faces of those ancient dames.

And then, out there everybody was so kind to everybody else, and somebody was always offering to bring one's mail or one's groceries from the queer low hut which served as general store, post office, machine shop and dwelling in one.

Of course the bill of fare was apt to be a little monotonous. There was a great deal of salt pork and bacon and dried fish, but there were lots of tinned vegetables and canned fruit from home to help out; and, really, it wasn't at all what one would fancy from the doleful tales one hears of the suffering in new countries.

Then there were papers and magazines and letters from dear ones. Only there was one trouble. The widow had no dear ones. She was so alone. And a little jealous feeling would come in spite of her when the two old maids

THE SHY MAN'S OFFERING.

would stop with their hands full of letters from sisters and nephews and nieces, to hand her a letter from—Priscilla.

Sometimes a tear would drop on Tom's sleek coat, but that was not often; only when she was silly, she told herself.

Now there was, about three-quarters of a mile to the right of the widow's shanty a modest little shock, half covered with luxuriant vines; over the front door was a roughly-made lattice, and this, too, was covered with the vines, and the whole cottage was a picturesque little affair and the envy of the schoolma'ams, who loved flowers, but whose vines always died and whose ornamental gardening was confined to a bed of sickly-looking four o'clocks which grew by their door.

The owner of the vine-draped shanty was a bachelor of middle age who spoke with a queer foreign accent. He was an extremely bashful man and he scarcely dared look at the ladies as they passed him, with the good-natured "Howdy" that was the customary greeting of the country.

The widow had watched him often from the window as he plowed upon his claim, and she admired his fine manly bearing, and she did wish in her heart that he'd be a bit neighborly, and she told Tom so; but Tom only purred and stretched himself in the sun.

Now, as I said, the schoolma'ams were passionately fond of flowers and were discouraged and chagrined that nothing would grow in their door yard. So one day when they saw the owner of Vine cottage, as they called it, setting out for town, they equipped themselves with a basket and trowel and, stopping for the widow, they went on a tour of pillage.

They all entered into the fun of the thing and in an hour or more a drooping, dejected-looking vine was clinging to a string beside the door of each cottage.

And the odd thing was, that while the vine of the schoolma'ams faded and died, that of the widow grew and throve marvelously. So wonderful was its growth that soon it began to spread over the walls and roof until her shanty rivaled the vine cottage in the way of verdure. And the two old maids joked the widow and caused her to blush furiously at the undignified prank she had played in getting the vine.

In time, the shy man grew a little neighborly and sometimes a brace of prairie chickens would be hung, without a word, on the widow's door. Or again it would be a lot of rare pebbles, quartz and agate, or a trout or pickerel from the lake near by. And at each offering the widow would nod her pretty head wisely and smile to herself.

Nature was kind to the pioneers that year. There had been no severe storms, no terrible heat or drought, and in November it was still mild and warm, without a sign of frost. Everyone said that it was a remarkable season, just as though the remark were quite new and original.

The widow was saying to herself one afternoon that after all it had been very pleasant to be a pioneer woman. There had been no great discomforts and deprivations, and now that there were but two months more to stay, she was half sorry.

She had been putting away some of her summer clothes, and a white Mother Hubbard wrapper, a favorite garment of the widow's, hung upon a clothesline beside the house. It was a dainty thing, white cambric, with lace-edged ruffles and with a pink ribbon bow with long ends at the neck. Indeed, to have seen the widow in it would have reconciled the most prejudiced person to the much-maligned Mother Hubbard.

There had been little fitful gusts of wind all day and late in the afternoon it became quite a gale. The tumble weeds hurried from spot to spot as the wind veered about, and the dainty Mother Hubbard flapped furiously in the breeze, but the widow was reading a very interesting book and never looked up until crash came a flying board against the side of the house and the shanty began to sway and rock like a cradle.

It was a short-lived storm and there was no damage done, and in half an hour the sky was again clear; but when Mrs. Drake went out to look for her gown it was gone. Of course the wind had torn it to tatters. There was no use to look for it; it was gone forever, and with a sigh the little woman went into the house.

The next two months flew very swiftly. The bachelor had grown bolder and had come to call, but the lively widow did the most of the talking and he replied in broken monosyllables.

The weather was still bright and pleasant, and there had been no blizzards, no snow. That was "remarkable" too, for it was nearly holiday time.

Then came Xmas, such a queer, quiet day with not even a letter from Priscilla. But even then there was genuine regret in her heart when Mrs. Drake began to pack her belongings preparatory to going back to the states. She was in better health and spirits than ever before, and she had a quarter section of land of her own and she had made some pleasant friends. On the whole it had paid well.

It was New Year's eve and she was to leave the next morning. She put on an extra lump of coal and set the lighted lamp in the window. She thought it might cheer some one, you know, and it did; it shone way out on the path and lit the way for the bachelor as he came hurrying across the fields.

As he came into the little room, bare of all the pretty little articles which had made it so cheerful and homelike, his heart gave a thump to think that it would so soon be empty and deserted, and he resolved to say what was on his mind at once.

But the words would not come; he could only open the parcel which he had brought and take out—guess what! The tattered remnants of a cambric Mother Hubbard.

As the widow gave a little squeal of surprise, he said, with a stately bow: "I have bring ze—ze chemise of madame, which ze wind brings to me so long ago." And with an impetuous motion he tore open his coat and there over his heart lay the folded pink ribbon which had been at the throat of the gown.

Somehow after that he didn't need words, for the widow's dark head rested on the ribbon and both his arms were about her.

Now there is something irresistibly funny about the courtship of middle-aged lovers. Young lovers are interesting enough, and old lovers are pathetically grotesque, but when two common-place people in middle life fall in love with each other I defy them to behave so that they are above ridicule.

So we will draw the curtain here, when I tell you that after her lover had gone the widow whispered to Tom: "So romantic, isn't it? But how absurd to call it a chemise." The widow returned to her old home and to Priscilla; and it has leaked out that she is wearing a ring with "Happy New Year" engraved inside, so the neighbors believe that the wedding is to come off on an anniversary of that day.

But I have told all that I am going to, now, and if you really want to know if they are married, just look among the marriage notices on New Year's day.

MARIE MORE MARSH.

GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

The Kind to Which the Prudent Man Will Confine Himself.

THOSE who intend to try once more the oft-tried experiment of making New Year's resolutions have not much time to lose. Such resolutions, if they are by any possibility to be kept, require a good deal of study beforehand. It must be the right kind of study, too. As a rule the more thought that is bestowed upon the subject the more elaborate and lengthy the set of resolutions become. That is going in the wrong direction. A more useful kind of study is that which discriminates, prunes and discards the superfluities. Don't resolve too much. If you do you will fail to keep your resolutions and that will tend to weaken your faith in yourself. If you are particularly fond of an after-dinner cigar and resolve to dispense with it, that is one of the resolutions that a discriminating resolver would prune out, because there is next to no possibility of its being kept more than three days at the utmost. There are some resolutions that are easier to keep, and to these the prudent man will confine himself. Resolve that if you sit down suddenly on the icy sidewalk, or pound your thumb with a hammer, you will make a few cursory remarks; because it is a resolution that you will surely keep. Resolve that in any case you will read this paper; that is another that you can't help keeping. Resolutions that are kept are a source of satisfaction, says the Boston Globe, and the kind that are made every New Year's day and never kept are a fountain of more or less poignant regret.

THE NEW YEAR COMETH.

And With It Come Good Resolutions and Other Bothersome Things.

Ever since a long time ago, New Year's day, the 1st of January, has been the day upon which I swear off. Not swear of-ten, but swear that henceforth I will off with some pernicious habit which is slowly but surely weaving its—its—its—its unseen network of—of—of—of vice about me. Vice given its own way too long will soon hold a person like a vice. (*Note:*—This is a play upon words which I just thought of. The former vice referring to sin in its unadulterated state, and the latter meaning an instrument in which carpenters torture two-by-fours and the like and lather them previous to doing a job of plane shaving. The phrase is double action. The terms may be transposed and they get there just the same.)

Last year I resolved that I would retrench in household expenses, and so I agreed to give my wife a certain amount of money every week and let her provide for the table. That is the amount was certain the first week, but my wife says that after that it was frequently decidedly uncertain. She hadn't had much experience but she did nobly. She said one day that she wished I would give her the name of some great wholesale grocer, a name that would be a synonym for the choicest of everything, so that when dealers asked her

THE BUTCHER DIDN'T HAVE THAT BRAND.

what brand of an article she wanted, she wouldn't be at a loss and display her ignorance.

I told her to always ask for H. K. Cooper's goods. (That isn't the name I gave her at all, but that name will do. I don't propose to give advertising worth $14 per agate line for nothing.)

The plan worked delightfully. When she would inquire for some good olives, and the clerk would ask her superciliously what brand she preferred, she would remark, as pert as you please: "H. K. Cooper's, if you have them."

Nine cases out of ten they didn't have anything so good, but the salesman would treat her with the greatest consideration because she appeared to be up in the business pretty well herself, and not try to work off any old shop worn pickles or last year's yeast cakes on her.

But, alas! one day she went into a meat market and in her most imperious voice said: "I would like some liver."

"What sort, madam?"

"Why, I supposed that liver was all alike."

"Oh, no. We sell several varieties."

"Well," answered Marie in desperation, "you may give me H. K. Cooper's."

And this is a true story and worthy of all people to be believed.

As near as I can find out, Adam was the first man to turn over a new leaf. I have a suspicion, though, that he turned over a good many before he got his winter's supply of clothing all made up. Adam must have reversed his cuff on Wednesday, and that was, of course, a turning of leaves. As a man once said to me, facetiously, when he discovered me trying to reverse my cuff without attracting attention, behind

EXAMINING ONE YEAR'S RECORD.

the cabinet organ at a donation party, having forgotten to do it in the haste of my toilet preparations: "One good turn deserves another."

I like to turn over a new leaf once in awhile. I get so tired of the old one. It is so stained, and blotted, and discolored. It is torn in so many places and it is written so full of mistakes and failures.

There are the 365 little "X" marks which indicate the days during the past year upon which I was needlessly cross and irritable. There are a half dozen near the top of the page marked "XX." That was while we were moving into the new house and getting settled. Then there's the entry January 2, where I began smoking again, and 379,472 little dots, like fly specks almost, which mark the number of times I have "kicked" about things during the past year.

It's a poor, dirty, miserable, badly kept, altogether too faithful record. It is interlined and criss-crossed, but it isn't illegible. Every entry stands out bold and clear, and I can't erase a single one of them. I can only turn the sorry-looking chronicle out of sight and begin with a clean, fresh, new page on the other leaf.

CHARLES NEWTON HOOD.

ANOTHER chapter has been written in the history of the world, a chapter more [illegible] than any in the wonderful [illegible], and the recording angel [illegible] and turns the page. It is a [illegible] it is granted to none to see its [illegible], and few indeed are [illegible] read its past. Its beginning [illegible] when the morning stars sang together over the order that was created out of chaos, and the plot, with its threads of light and shade, sublime courage and pitiful cowardice, hate and love, joy and fear, no man can comprehend and no man can alter. He may delay the consummation of the Divine plan, but there is all eternity for its completion.

The year of our Lord 1891 has witnessed marvels in the arts and sciences. The depths of the earth and the heights of the clouds have been called upon to yield their secrets, and the whole realm of space is now virtually the kingdom of the mind. In a year the world has made giant strides toward the perfection of civilization, and every one of the last fifty years has witnessed discoveries and inventions that have put to shame those of as many centuries, until, pausing in amazement on the threshold of the future, we are forced to exclaim: "What wilt thou bring forth, oh, inexplicable void! The crowning of man's dreams or the end of material greatness? The summit of perfection or the return of formless chaos?"

Great as has been the progress of the world, the high water mark has only been reached in certain favored spaces, and vast continents are still reserved for the maturing of God's purposes.

To our nation it has been a year whose bounteousness and peace have been unparalleled in the history of any country. The seasons have poured from their laps their garnered treasures, and north, south, east and west rejoice in abundance. The faces of nature and the elements have been propitious, and the smile of Providence seems to rest in benediction upon the land. In the social world too, the fruitage has been abundant. Never before in the history of our country has so much good been done by earnest individuals and society for the reclamation of evil, the reform of abuses, and the amelioration of the condition of the deserving poor. The harvest of good deeds in that has been great in spite of the fact there are still fallow fields, and that much has been left unattempted. There are those, of course, who take gloomy views of the times, who see the evil, but fail to recognize the good, and declare that morally the world is growing weaker and more degenerate with each year. But truth, the mighty leaven, is germinating, dropped in the dark soil of ignorance and error; and hidden away from sight, folded in the bursting sheath, is the sprout which shall one day become the giant oak, 'neath which our nation shall be sheltered from storms and noontide heats.

Not in the spirit of the Pharisee, but in that of reverent humility, should we view our blessings of the past year, and have a fraternal sympathy for the famishing peasants whose cry goes up from the banks of the Volga, and from the slopes of the Ural mountains; for the exiled race, whose wandering through the wilderness of prejudice and injustice is as cruel as their forty years' probation in the desert; for the poverty-oppressed masses of our kindred nation, whose mother tongue is ours, and with whom we claim a common ancestry, and for those nations who sit in darkness or girt about with misty and uncertain light, but longing for perfect day.

The year 1892, upon whose threshold we now stand, is surely destined to be a momentous one in the world's history, and to America is granted the honor of erecting a milestone in the universal progress. In the year that is before us the people of the old world will be summoned to witness the inauguration of a monument worthy of the genius and courage of Columbus, a monument which puts to shame the proudest structure ever raised to commemorate the great deeds of prince or conqueror, and that monument is an enlightened and prosperous people, whose self reverence, self knowledge and self control have raised them, in but little more than a century, to be the object of the wonder and admiration of the world. Not Columbus, the Genoese, nor Columbus, the navigator, do we thus honor, but the courage which was represented in him, which dared to fling away old traditions and obey the inward voice urging onward to great achievement.

The year lies before us, a mystery as great as the mystery of all mysteries—death. We meet it with high resolve, but every day in our life in reality marks a similar anniversary, and every night witnesses the end of a year, a step taken irrevocably from time toward eternity, for there, and there only, can we meet face to face that shrouded shape, the Future, which forever flees as we approach. If we would truly live well, the years, whether spent in work or meditation, in pleasure or pain, should yield us something more than material good, which is as evanescent as the morning mists. The outlines of our lives are drawn for us by circumstances, training, heredity and other influences above our control, but day by day we are filling in the light and shade, the coloring in the picture, and it is the coloring that will make or mar the beauty of that creation that shall hang in the gallery of God.

LOU V. CHAPIN.

[illegible] in [illegible]

Dashaway—I [illegible] that you were around to Miss [illegible]'s last night. Did you see the [illegible] mother?

Chorister—No. [illegible] saw me out first.—Jury.

[illegible] Customs.

"Going to [illegible] off drinking and smoking this New Year's?" "Of course. I have always done it and I'm not going to quit now. I'm a firm believer in keeping up old customs."—Philadelphia Times.