

"WELL, COME WAYS 1908 WAS A PERFECTLY GOOD YEAR" SAYS THE HOTEL CLERK BY IRVIN S COBB.

"WELL," said the House Detective of the St. Nickless, "it's purty near time to ring out the old and ring in the new."

"It is," said the Hotel Clerk, "with a patent wringer. The old year is almost gone, Larry. December's days are numbered. Of course if you want to be frisky about it they've been numbered all along, the numbers ranging from first to 31 inclusive, but it sounds more poetical to put it that way when speaking to a close friend."

"And I always feel more poetical somehow at this season of the year than at others. With Christmas over, all but nothing for the presents you gave, and the old year on its last legs, or its last legs, depending on whether you like to think of it sitting down or standing up, I begin to feel a bit reminiscent and retrospective and everything like that. I pick up my favorite magazine and I find on the back of it a picture which shows a busy, new and original treatment of an old theme, depicting as it does, an old tottery gentleman with long whiskers and bare legs stepping off the left-hand side of the cover, while a little chap about two days old with nothing in the way of personal baggage except a sack around his waist, and a hat on his head, is driving down the middle of the page in whatever style of vehicle happens to be newest. I remember when he came in an old-fashioned high wheeled carriage and then on a bicycle and last year he was driving an automobile. I look for him this year in an airplane, but except for that the fixtures will be as always. And in the window of the stationery store I see the new art calendar with the design of a lady angel, that everybody buys but nobody uses, preferring the non-art kind that the insurance agent or the coal dealer sends with his compliments in a pasteboard tube, wearing few clothes if any—the lady angel I mean, not the coal dealer. With anthracite selling at \$8.75 a ton if weighed on its scales or \$11.50 if weighed on somebody else's, he ought to have all the clothes he needs this winter, and his wife too. But most of the art calendars that I've seen this far this season, depict the lady angel in an under-dressed condition, kneeling as if in prayer. There's no explanation for this as far as I can learn, but often the calendar also shows a snow storm raging in the back ground, so I assume that probably she's praying for a sleigh ride."

"But be that as it may, I observe these things and by them and other things such as a more coming due in bank, I am brought to realize that '08' with its hopes and fears, its disappointments and its fulfillments is almost gone while at the threshold stands young, buoyant foolish '09,' bringing us new hopes, new fears and the 61st Congress."

"Well, lookin' back on 'er she wasn't such a bum year as ye're goin' on," said the House Detective philosophically.

"Oh, not at all," said the Hotel Clerk. "Now that it's practically used up, all but a thin, narrow strip along the back seam, I can see where it was a perfectly good year in many respects. If

she was to come in that door right now and ask for a reference I'd cheerfully write one out, informing all whom it might concern that while Nineteen-Eight had broken some of our most cherished glassware, and had occasionally scorched the steak, on the whole she had given reasonable satisfaction, and we were parting from her with more or less regret. A good many things that we thought were going to happen in 1908 didn't happen, and quite a number of things that we didn't expect at all were constantly occurring from day to day, such as Presidential messages and alimony suits in the Gould family. But that sort of thing has been more or less common with most of her recent predecessors. So I guess nobody can kick."

"It was a good year for divorce statistics, night-riding, liars (see Roosevelt's public utterances), campaign contributions and the Outlook Magazine, and a poor year for Democrats, musical comedies, Kaiser Wilhelm and people formerly in the habit of carrying on a correspondence with Mr. Archibald, of No. 26 Broadway, New York. As regards the Taft family things broke even on the whole. William H. bringing home the goods in a neat bundle, but Charles P. being left with a painful cavity in the bank roll and the nerve exposed, despite which the Ohio Senatorship continues to remain some distance remote and refuses to come winnily to the pasture bars, although frequently called to in a kind and winning tone of voice.

"Early in the Spring several thousand persons started out with a certain system for beating Wall street, and the frosts of Autumn found some of them connected with the city dock department in the scow-trimming branch at \$1.25 per day, while others were occupying points of vantage on the benches of our public squares and parks, and engaged in the culture of fringe on the panis. An unprecedentedly large number of flying machines were built and at least two of them flew; also an unprecedentedly large number. Many improvements were noted in automobiles, but none in the chauffeurs. A new cocktail called the "Fire and Flames Cocktail" was invented, but conservative dressers remained faithful to the reliable Martini with an olive in it.

"In accordance with the custom of the times the orange crop was totally destroyed by frost early in the Spring, followed three weeks later by the total destruction of the peach crop, thereby assuring a full average yield of the produce of the first named, including orange blossoms, orange phosphate and those sassy little orange-wood stabbers that the manicure girls run down under your finger nail an inch or two, to see if the quick is still there, while parties attending roof-gardens reported that they never saw finer peaches, including both the preserved kind and those fresh-peeled. Alfalfa did well in New York, where Hughes won, but poorly in Indiana, where Kern lost.

"Finance rallied and commercial con-



OCCUPYING POINTS OF VANTAGE ON BENCHES OF OUR PUBLIC SQUARES

ditions showed an upward tendency. The Standard Oil reported no serious business reverses and the Pierpont Morgans kept both of the hired girls right on through the Summer, when others were cutting down their household expenses. The Interstate Commerce Commission remained awake almost all of one afternoon in the latter part of June and then adjourned subject to the chairman's call, which is expected in 1909.

In a literary way things were fairly active, but nothing exciting. Let's see: Mr. Morse wrote his business reminiscences and Mr. Morse told his under oath, both gentlemen reserving the option of holding back a few things from time to time. Mr. Morse got 15 years. President Roosevelt was induced to close a contract at \$1 a word for all words, while the published essays of John Quincy Adams were marked down on the one-hand book stands to 10 cents per large calf-bound duodecimo volume, only slightly used, thus showing one of the advantages enjoyed in a literary sense by a live President over a dead one."

"It was a good year for sports events, too," put in the House Detective.

"It was that," agreed the Hotel Clerk. "In the domain of sport things were exceedingly active. Taka football, for example, Harvard beat Yale—no, not the Yale preparatory lads, but the regular Yales—and the Army beat the Navy, thereby emphasizing the need for the stronger Navy we've been hearing so much talk about, and Yonkers High School put it all over Yonkers Grammar Grade and a strong all-American team was picked by the experts of the Eastern newspapers, including one substitution from Michigan and giving a University of Chicago lad honorable mention. The rest of the selections were from the Eastern colleges, the same as heretofore. In other branches of sport things moved at a lively rate. Let's see: Gotch threw Hackenschmidt and Bryan threw Haskell and Roosevelt got a lip-lock on Forker, but failed to touch his shoulders to the mat; Flanagan put the 14-pound hammer I don't know how far, but Taft got it back in ample time to dent Uncle Joe Cannon a couple of deep dents with it; James J. Corbett came out in a new play; Mike's failed to give the second round to the New York version; Mike Dolin went into vaudeville; Nat Goodwin married again; several new theatrical angles took a long chance; and little Johnny Hayes did well abroad, but in responding to an entreaty on the home grounds, fell down hard and severely—sprained his Marathon trophy. That'll do for the sports."

Outside of our own country the world moved along about as usual. The war in the Balkans was a trifle slow owing to backward weather conditions, but developed nicely toward the latter part of the Summer, there being a total casualty list of one Kurd badly crippled

and several chesses badly frightened. President Castro of our sister republic to the southward was threatened with bombardment twelve or thirteen times, he forgets which, and so do I. Haytt enjoyed the regular Fall and Winter revolution, exchanging a Heerle-colored ruler for one with a complexion like a yellow clarinet that would match the new golden oak dining-room furniture in the president's palace better. The Czar of Russia was not pestered much by life insurance agents and the King of Spain had his photograph taken several times, showing that he is still wearing his lower jaw quite some distance from the rest of his face. Turkey got a new constitution, but after intense hopes was reported, consequently at last accounts, in India upwards of 2,000,000 of infuriated Parsees and Hindus and other sects got all ready to revolt, but something came up, a white policeman I think it was, and they hurriedly dispersed to their respective homes, but under the bed, England strangled to enlarge her navy and Germany took steps to reduce her Kaiser. The French remained at peace with everybody except each other and their gay capital was filled all Summer with New York society people who wouldn't have been there if it hadn't been for South Dakota amending the divorce laws. Sioux Falls' loss was Paris' gain. Sweden exported the customary shipments of parlor matches, servant girls, fish and flat janitors, and Switzerland continued inland throughout the entire 12 months.

"Yes, sir; taking her all around, Larry, she was a good, sound, safe and reliable year and I don't mind speaking a kind word for her even at this late date."

"D'ye look for much excitement in Nineteen-nine?" asked the House Detective.

"Well, Teddy's going to Africa and that ought to help some," said the Hotel Clerk.

"I wonder will he miss Loeb much?" said the House Detective.

"I shouldn't think so," said the Hotel Clerk. "Any time he should pine for Loeb he can get practically the same result by shooting one of those secretary birds."

A MAGIC CHRISTMAS COIN AND WHAT IT DID FOR THE LITTLE MOTHER OF THE MINISTERS CHILDREN BY LOUISE LEXINGTON.

"I TOOK the children down to see the toys today, father."

"That's a good girl. Did they seem to enjoy themselves?"

"Yes, every one of them, and especially Baby. She is so easily pleased. The minister's Elizabeth sighed in quite a grown-up manner, and her father looked up quickly from his writing.

"What is it, daughter?" he inquired.

"Nothing," answered the little mother of the minister's motherless flock. "Nothing at all, father, only it seems so hard to be poor at Christmas time. I'm sorry."

"Poor!" echoed the good man, reproachfully. "Count your blessings, Elizabeth, and don't forget the many gifts we received last Christmas, testifying to a wealth of loving friends. No one is poor who has a friend."

Elizabeth's face brightened as she turned to a gift of a load of potatoes, one of wood, a great jar of marmalade and a whole cheese; and these she remembered with gratitude. But she still cherished a resentment in her heart towards numerous well-meaning members of the parish who had deceived the family with elaborate articles of cheapness, such as embroidered kitchen towels and bedroom slippers, much too fancy for everyday use; and with delicate silk and velvet couch pillows, much too ornate for any use at all. These, when they had needed jackets, gloves and shoes so sadly.

"It's money, I mean, father," she finally answered.

"But, daughter, I gave you as much money as usual for Christmas."

"Yes, father."

"Oh, I'll make it do, somehow, father. Don't you worry. It's only that Tommy has grown so big and wants such expensive things; and the twins will not even look at any but great big dolls, with real hair and eyelashes."

The minister looked tired and worried. He had been driving about the countryside in the cold, visiting the sick and afflicted. Elizabeth noticed that he was looking less, however, than before she got his prescription filled—with part of that Christmas money. How that five dollars had dwindled in three days' time! First, there were warm gloves for father, then the cough tonic, then rubbers for Edith and Judith, and lastly, the broken window at the schoolhouse, the story of which Tommy had come to her with instead of worrying father. Only one dollar left now, but she and Mrs. Mullen would try to make it all up by saving in the housekeeping allowance.

Elizabeth sat pondering these things the following morning, while she put the finishing touches to some simple little gifts, when Mrs. Mullen ushered in a caller, and then disappeared with a disapproving clump of heavy shoes. It was the housekeeper's one regret that she was not allowed to deal summarily with all the visitors who daily applied to the parsonage side door, but in the absence of the minister himself, was required to turn them over to Elizabeth, whose judgment,

me the overcoat that hangs in the hall closet?"

"Not the overcoat with a fur collar, father?"

"Yes, dear; the same. There is a \$10 gold piece in the inside pocket. I just happened to recall it today, when I was wondering how I could get some more Christmas money for you."

Elizabeth grew suddenly sober. "Why, father," she exclaimed, "I gave that overcoat away this morning!" and she told him all about it.

"It had been hanging up in the church vestry for about a year," she explained, "and was crowded out of the home missionaries' boxes twice, and did no good in all those months, except for the one time you wore it when you had to ride into the country straight from church and had no time to come home first."

"Yes, I know. It was a wedding I went to that stormy afternoon, and I put

the fee in the overcoat pocket and forgot all about it until today."

Elizabeth felt a sudden desire to laugh and cry together. "And to think I gave it away!" she exclaimed tragically, but her father consoled her.

"Perhaps he needed it more than we did, daughter," and Elizabeth brightened. "Oh, yes, father; I'm quite certain he needed it for food. He looked as if I told Mrs. Mullen, quite as if the wind might blow him away. Mrs. Mullen said she hoped it would—and all the rest of the beggars that hung about your doors. But he didn't beg for a thing—he didn't even hint—he was a perfect gentleman!"

Elizabeth was forced to give over this opinion, however, as Christmas drew nearer and nearer, nor could she help recounting each day the many things the \$10 gold piece would have got for their

free. Her gifts this year seemed particularly valueless, and as they had been unable to save anything from the house-keeping fund she feared the children would be disappointed. And so, on Christmas eve, when the pretty tree had received its last bit of tinsel trimming, the candles had been all placed and the popcorn and cranberry chain hung up, and Mrs. Mullen, quite as if the wind might blow him away, Mrs. Mullen said she hoped it would—and all the rest of the beggars that hung about your doors. But he didn't beg for a thing—he didn't even hint—he was a perfect gentleman!"

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Oiseau Is Sold for \$20

Great \$20,000 Race Horse Brings Less Than Spavined Mule.

Chicago, Inter-Ocean. Oiseau has been sold for \$20. The great racehorse for which "Diamond Jim" Brady once paid \$20,000 was knocked down for this paltry sum at an auction in Kentucky a few days ago.

Time was when Oiseau was one of the great names of America. As a two-year-old he all but swept the boards with his victories. In his three-year-old form he was a candidate for the championship of the turf. There were giants in those days, and Oiseau ranked as a worthy rival of Sycamore, Arifull, Irish Lad, Waterbury, The Pick and MacChesney.

A round and beautiful creature he was in the glorious days of his prime, his neck arching with power, his eyes bright with stolid vitality, his skin sleek and shimmering in the sun, his legs of faultless slenderness and grace seeming to spurn the earth as he moved.

What a picture he used to make as he cantered and galloped on his way to the post, his royal blood lines showing in every curve and line of his perfect body! What fortunes were raked with the gambler's of the betting sheds whenever he faced the starter's flag! What ellens, as of death, used to hold the crowded grandstands, when out of a spooler of dust at the head of the stretch, Oiseau shot into view for a neck-and-neck duel with some fleet rival!

What cries would be raised of "Oh, you Oiseau!" and "Come on, Oiseau!"—cries of hero worshipers—as the gallant chestnut crept up, inch by inch, from the smoldering flag of his foremost competitor to saddle girl and from saddle girl to throatlatch and, coming through on the rail, fought out the battle with bulldog courage, nose and nose, nod and nod. And what terrific cheers always thundered to the sky when Oiseau swept under the wire a winner, with the kiest throughbred of the turf trailing in dust and defeat behind him!

But the days of his glory soon passed. In the victories of other famous horses in succeeding years Oiseau was forgotten. Few knew what had become of him until his sale revealed that the unromantic years intervening since his old triumph had been passed in munching blue grass on a Kentucky farm. And when the veteran of turf battles was led into the auction ring there was but one bid—a sum any self-respecting livestock dealer would spurn if offered for a spavined mule.

The world is full of men who have struggled and won in finance, in trade, in the professions, men who have mounted to exult heights of power or



"NEVER MIND ME," THE MAN ANSWERED, "I WANT TO GO NOW."