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There's a time of the year when we pause on the brink of the new one to come, and the pause makes us think of the past and the years that we've lived in—how long before And wonder just what in the future's in store— When we cast up accounts with a dubious eye, Resolving hereafter much better to try, And then when we've settled this point in our mind We turn with our thoughts retrospective to find Some scenes in scenes that we've lived through before, Though the joy may be less and the grief may be more.



For even in sorrows gone by, as we look, We get the same pleasure as reading a book. That, always familiar, still makes our hearts burn As over its pages at New Year's we turn. So Arthur Munroe, as he trudged down the street, Wrapped up in his greatcoat, his face to the sleet, With crowds all around him and yet all alone, Dwelt on scenes of the past and the years that had flown. And so, my dear reader, if you will draw near, I'll give you a glimpse of Munroe's past career.

RETROSPECTIVE.

If you'll travel all night in the fast mail express On the A. and B. road to a point—I confess I've forgotten the name. It's a junction, you see, And it's down in some maps just as plain as can be, And then, changing cars, if you'll ride half a day You will come to the beautiful village of Clay. It was here in a quaint little cottage one morn That Arthur Munroe, our young hero, was born. They say, and with truth, that the country's the place Where a man in the years that come after can trace The rich drafts of health that have been such a blessing To help in his life work. But I am digressing.



And so, to be brief, I will merely remark That the boy's early life was indeed all a lark. He ran in the fields, and he grew stout and tall, With skating and swimming and playing baseball, And his mother, dear woman, was proud of her boy. And hallowed him a blessing—in fact, her one joy. But, alas for our story, the truth must be told, She was not overstocked with the metal called gold. And the time came when Arthur, by nature no shirk, Was obliged to stop playing and go right to work, Which he did with a will, though the pay was quite small. On The Herald, a weekly sheet taken by all In the village of Clay, and 'tis needless to state, More popular paper 'twould be hard to rate. And so our young hero, to whom type was Greek Began on The Herald at so much a week, A sum so diminutive, I must allow, 'Twould be quite too petty to mention it now. And his duty was this—to deliver each week The Herald to all of the lowly and meek And those who were not so—in brief, I may say To all the subscribers who paid up in Clay. Among these subscribers was one named Judge Green, Who upon certain days in the week might be seen Riding out with his daughter, a dark-eyed young maid, With a face that was sweet, an expression as staid As the dearest young grandmother pictured in books. There was no other girl who excelled her in looks.

And Helen Green's eyes, and her nose, and her hair, And her old-fashioned ways were beyond all compare.

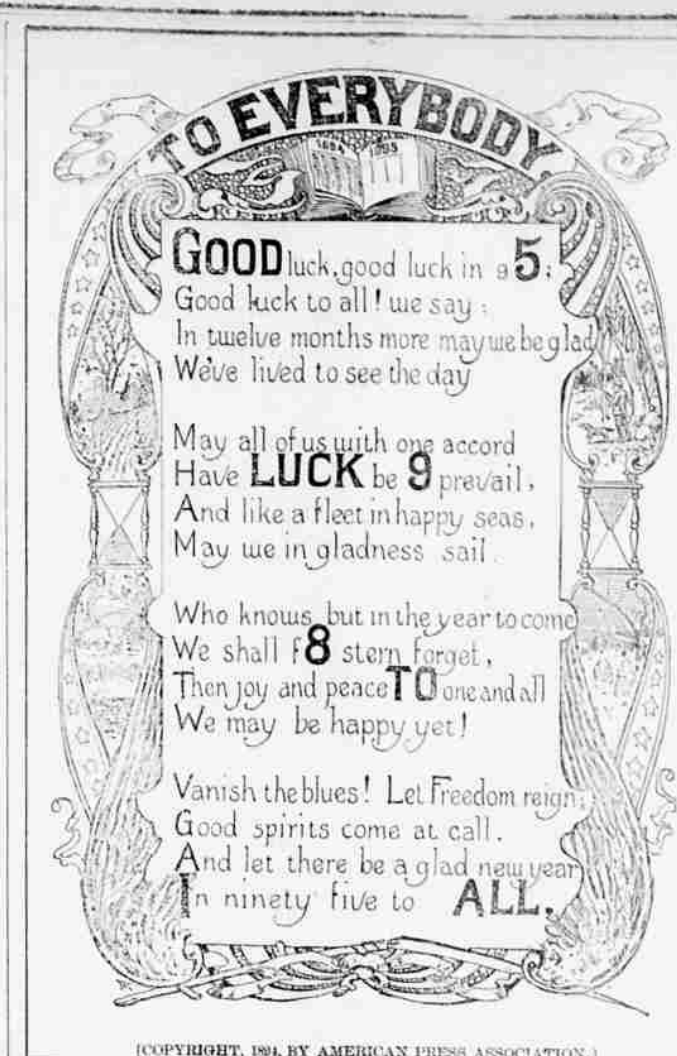
'Twas natural, then, when Munroe every week Left his paper at Green's, he should linger to speak Just a word or receive just a wonderful smile From the sweet little girl with the old-fashioned style, And 'twas perfectly plain—it is nature, not art— That in time young Munroe should find lacking his heart. And then came the offer from New York one day, And Arthur Munroe and his mother left Clay. And the boy found himself, with his youth and ambition, A rising young man with an envied position. Reporter and editor—thus had he grown. To be quite a power in the time that had flown Since he loved Helen Green, yet he felt an odd thrill When he pictured her face, for he loved the girl still, And so on one summer he sought compensation For years of hard work, and he took his vacation In Clay, where the love of his life might be seen, And he sent up his card, if you please, to Miss Green. She was so glad to see him. 'Twas striking how tall He'd grown in the years that had passed! That was all. And then the door opened. She turned, with a smile, "My friend from New York—Mr. Sidney De Lisle." The two men both bowed. They instinctively knew It was war to the death, and their faces both grew Quite set and determined. Few men can conceal Like women so suddenly just what they feel. The fatal day came when Munroe must return. He resolved to stake all. Oh, dear reader, discern Why it is that the heart of a maiden's so blighty And clings to the weak when she could have the mighty. And so it came out, as you may have expected, That Munroe turned his face back to work, crushed, rejected. To have such a setback was not a light blow To a man of the stamp of young Arthur Munroe. But work helped him greatly. Then after awhile He learned of her marriage to Sidney de Lisle. Though his face turned quite pale, he resolved to forget And harbor no feelings of hopeless regret. So now that I've shown you the past of his life, Dear reader, you'll know why he hasn't a wife, And you'll know why it is that his head's slightly bowed As he walks in deep thought through the New Year's eve crowd.

THE MEETING.

Have you ever walked Broadway at night, when the snow Has turned into sleet and the winter winds blow From all quarters at once in a frenzy of sport And cut off the breaths of the passersby short? Have you seen the lights glimmer, as if through a fog On a night when you'd gather in even a dog, Though the sorriest pup that you ever be-held, Or the worst looking tramp that, by hunger compelled, Asks food as he cringes in front of your door While the storm howls around him as never before? Have you seen the shop windows all glitter with glory On the night before New Year's? If so, then my story Will bring back the scene. Have you gone with the throng Of bundled up humans, the weak and the strong, The rich and the poor, the sad and the gay, As they hurry along in the night on Broadway? Have you noticed the beggar, whose acted despair Gives color at night to that great thoroughfare? So Arthur Munroe walked along in the night, But absorbed, so that little appealed to his sight. And his ears were quite deaf to the beggars' faint cry As they touched his greatcoat or in vain caught his eye.



Until 'neath the gaslight's faint glow he was stopped By a man in his way. He mechanically dropped His hand in his pocket, and then he looked down With a curious eye on this tramp of the town Who'd jostled against him. This creature, for so He seemed to the vision of Arthur Munroe, Was a man who appeared to have shrunk by some law That applies to all victims of poverty's gnaw.



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His clothes hung around him in tatters. His face Had written in language quite plainly "hard case," And yet there was something—define it who can— To show that its owner had once been a man. "Beg pardon," he muttered. Like some missing link Of the past, Munroe heard, and he felt his heart sink.



The voice was familiar. Again, as he gazed At the face of the stranger before him half dazed, He knew by the pose and the general style The one who addressed him was Sidney de Lisle.

THE HAND OF A FRIEND.

There are some who aver, and with truth he is said, That the man who is weak might much better be dead. You may curb a strong nature or prune it at will, But you can't make a river gush forth from a rill. You may nurture a seed with a care quite complete, But you can't make an oak from a small grain of wheat. And yet if this riddle you'll solve, so to speak, You have first got to know if the man's really weak. In every man's life there's a time when he'll fall If he hasn't the strength of a friend with-in call. But once over this by himself he may grow To a much higher plane if he has but a show. There's a weak spot in all of us. Think of it yet As you see poor De Lisle in the cold and the wet. Was he hopelessly weak? Was his soul shrunken bare By the curse put upon it, or was it despair That brought him so low? Did he need now the hand Of a friend to return him his own self command? These thoughts through Munroe's mind came surging quite fast As he stared at De Lisle, and a thought of the past. Meanwhile there had come through the wet and the cold A flash from the eye of his rival of old. A flash that was full of complete recognition And freighted with meaning. He knew his position, And with quick intuition took in at a glance The whole situation. Munroe, in a trance, Recovered more slowly. De Lisle, with a slight Shrug of shoulders, turned away in the night. Then it was that Munroe, with a quick, hearty smile, Laid his hand on the shoulder of Sidney de Lisle. "Come, De Lisle," he said briefly, "this never will do. I'm not such a fellow as that. As for you, if ever a man was in need of a friend, You certainly are. But you never can mend Yourself on the wheel of a falsified pride." The other man stopped, shook, then trembled and cried. With his hands to his face, and he sobbed: "I am weak."

From exposure. My God, you're the first one to speak A kind word to me for a time—well, it seems An eternity, such as we dream of in dreams Since she— At the mention of this word Munroe Grew stern, and his voice slipped his soft tone. "And so," He burst out, "you have left her, you cur!" The other man's eyes flashed. He did not for an instant of time. Then his face quickly flushed With the insult upon it. Not utterly crushed, He drew himself up and said: "Never! Don't dare To repeat what you've said, for, Munroe, I will swear That I did not do this." "Will you swear," said Munroe, "That you never ill-treated her? If not, then go! You are worthless as such. Now, De Lisle, I demand No word of your past. As the past let it stand. But I ask: Do you love her? And where is she now? I do not require that you tell me just how You have brought yourself down. We are all of us weak, But have you ill-treated your wife, De Lisle? Speak!" De Lisle paused a moment and looked in the face Of his mentor. "Munroe," he replied, "my disgrace Is not of that sort, and I swear, sir, to you That my wife has gone home. Do I love her? I do. I swear that she left me herself—well, in short, For no other reason than this—nonsupport. Since then"— But Munroe, with a gesture, said: "Stop! You must tell me no more. Come, De Lisle, you will drop If we stand here much longer. Your word is enough. I ask for no more. You're no longer a tough. I believe you. I'll help you to make, if you can, From the wreck of yourself a respectable man." And under his breath he said softly, "I'll make A man of this vagabond, just for her sake."

ONE YEAR LATER.

Miss Percy of Clay to a friend out of town— Some lines from her letter are here jotted down: "MY DEAR—I've a strange bit of romance to tell. It's about Helen Green. You remember her? Well,



You remember her marriage to Sidney de Lisle And how well she looked as she walked down the aisle. They began in Dubuque. A position he got, And with love on their side and a small house and lot They started in life. True, his clerkship was small, And he had a few hundreds behind him. That's all.

Yet many who've married would count them quite lucky— The man with this start and the woman so plucky. How weak was De Lisle! I declare, it is strange, And I'm thankful I haven't a man with-in range. Young Sidney de Lisle was the man of all men Who would win a girl's heart without trouble, and then He came of good family. In all respects striking, He was just such a fellow you couldn't help liking. He was handsome and witty, a man of good parts, And they say he played havoc with many girls' hearts. And so he met Helen and loved her. My friend, You doubt this? And yet you must wait to the end. When a man, my dear girl, with no training in life Starts out with some cash and a sweet little wife, They say that his wife will stick by him much longer. Than the cash, and she'll prove in the end to be stronger. So Helen, with patience, began to dissemble And put on a smile when her heart all a-tremble, She felt more like crying, while Sidney began To go down the hill. And yet, still like a man, He brushed with fate, and I think he did well. When we think of his training. And now I must tell The saddest of all of this tragedy, dear, For one cannot expect to correct in a year The mistakes of a rearing that always was wrong. Unless we are born with a will doubly strong. And when we turn back, ah, how little we know Of the dragons who've followed us on-ward! And so When the little babe came and the mother grew sleek, And bills of all shapes and all sizes grew thick, He began to lose nerve till the fatal day came When he lost his position. He was not to blame, So Helen declares. Times were dull, so they said, So the head of his office just cut off his head. Then it was that De Lisle lost his head on the brink And thought he could drown all his troubles in drink. That shows that the fellow was weak or was lacking In just the right friend to secure him a backing. I do not know which, but the facts must remain. He had failed with his life. Though it may give us pain To admit this was so, yet it was, all the same. For the fault was De Lisle's, and with him lies the blame. Too proud to write home, she'd have died in the end If by chance she had not been observed by a friend. From the east, who took in at a glance her despair,



And who sat down and wrote to the judge Helen and there. The judge sent on money and wrote and implored Her to leave and come on to the home she'd adored. And to leave De Lisle there. She refused the request And wrote she would stick by De Lisle in the west. But the judge was aroused. Though he sent no rebuke, He took the first train, and he went to Dubuque, And he brought her back home. Was poor Helen wrong—maybe— When she left De Lisle there? But she thought of the baby And the life it would lead in a home such as theirs. So she left him behind. Since that day she declares She's been filled with remorse. Was she right? Was she wrong? You know what we women are, dear. We are strong— So strong in some things and so weak in others. Was she weak when she left him, or was it a mother's Great love for her child that had come in between Her duty toward Sidney de Lisle? Had you seen The little one's face as she cried for papa. You would know just the struggle in Helen's breast. Ah! My dear, when the market of marriage you scan Don't forget what I say and look out for a man. Who has earned his own bread and has proved beyond doubt He can stand on his feet by himself and without Any prop but his head and his hands and himself, Or else you would better remain on the shelf And live by yourself, for the man, my dear friend, Who's idle, although he have wealth with-out end. May be good for some things in this life's giddy whirl, But he won't make a husband for every good girl.

And now I have come to a part, I confess, That's the best of it all, and I'm sure you could guess If you haven't already the story discerned. The truth is, my dear, that De Lisle has returned! He has come back to Helen. I wish you could see How he looks, how he acts. I believe you would be Convinced that the man has improved, had you known Young De Lisle as I know him before. He has grown Much older, his mind and his soul better shaped. He looks like a man who's been scorched—and escaped.

P. S.—Since I've written this Helen has told Me the pitiful story her husband's unravelled Since the night that they parted. He does not know how, But on to New York he came after. Some-how



He beat his way on. Then for days and for nights He wandered around in the worst of all plights. Ashamed to go home in the state he was in, And all the time sinking still deeper in sin, Until he was seen by a friend. Who it was Or just when he knew him we don't know, because The friend made him promise he never would tell. But he took him straight home, gave him shelter, and—well, He braced up De Lisle, and he got him a place And practically saved him from deeper disgrace. De Lisle since that time has been going up hill And worked to a place that 'twould be hard to fill. And now after waiting for nearly a year He's returned, for the ones that he holds the most dear. They are going back soon to their home. What think you Of the romance I've written? It's every bit true, And I know you'll be glad when you hear in the end That the husband was rescued by means of a friend."

A HAPPY HOME.

In ending a tale 'tis a privilege quite To show to the reader a picture that's bright, Not far from the town, but away from the riot, Where things are more peaceful and restful and quiet. 'Twas here the De Lises settled down, and 'twas here That we find them again on a happy New Year. "Here's a book by Munroe," said De Lisle as he came And sat by his wife in the light of the flame Of the fire. "It's a good book to read. What success he has had!" "Yes, he has had indeed," said Helen. "I often remember," she mused, "The way that he looked on the day I refused His offer of marriage. I little thought then That Arthur Munroe would be great among men."



He must have worked hard. A man who would let No obstacle stand in his way." "You regret?" said her husband as, drawing quite near, He clasped her hand gently. "Say, do you, my dear?" "Regret!" she replied, with her face all aglow, As she smiled such a smile as a wife can bestow. "No, never, my dear." (Ah, how little she knew!) "For Munroe could not love half so much as you do!"

TOM MASSON.