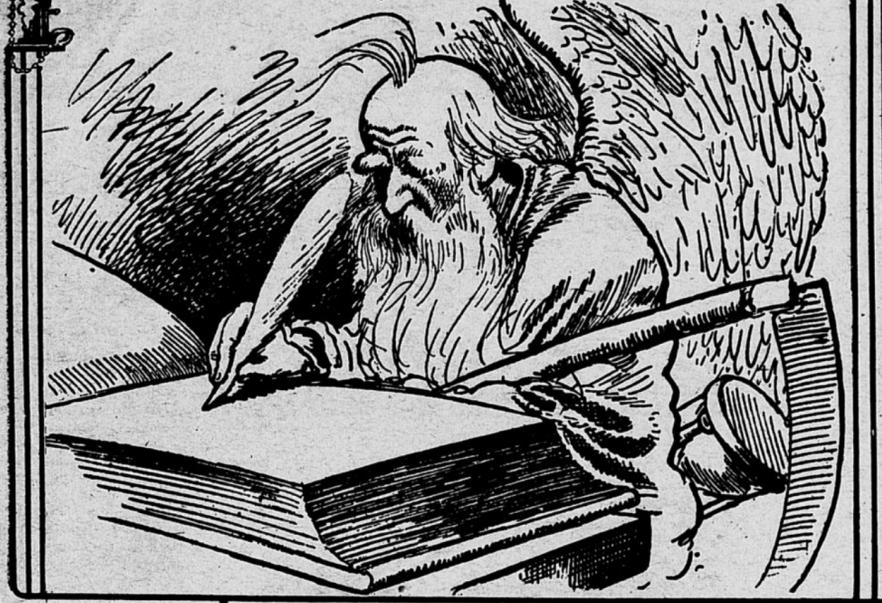


"Good-Bye, Old Year!"



GOOD-BYE, Old Year!—the fickle World Pursues another Flame, And Time—the ruthless, changing Time—Will now erase your name.

And yet your younger rival with His aspect bright and new Is but an unread version of The hopes we had in you.

The apple-blossoms of his Spring, The little seeds that lie Deep buried in the Heart of Earth, Will live again—and die.

He, too, will give the warmth of Sun, And days of slanting rain, As he deals out our yearly share Of happiness and pain.

The big round moon and silver stars That lighted up your skies Will shine upon as many loves In just as many, eyes.

And he will bring the fragrant June When crimson roses nod, And hurry through the Summertime To flaunt the goldenrod.

The painted pathway of his Fall Will be with clouds o'ercast, Because his Winter footsteps reach The Portal you have passed.

Good-bye, Old Year!—we loved you well; We found your treasures dear, But you have died as monarchs die— And so—Long live the Year!

—Nan Terrell Reed, in N. Y. Times

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Customs and Their Origin; Happenings of Long Ago.

All Peoples Have Ways of Amusing Themselves on Special Occasions and at Fixed Seasons.

AN OLD philosopher, who was none the less a philosopher for his constant and close observation of men, remarked that we can best judge men's temperament and ideals by watching them at their work and at their play. A keen observer would have very little difficulty in judging Americans by their work. One such has aptly called this country "The Land of the Strenuous Life." Even our sports partake so much of this strenuousness that the medical profession is beginning to warn us of overindulgence in the more violent forms of athletics.

But all peoples have ways of amusing themselves on special occasions and at fixed seasons after a manner so well established that it has come to be regarded a kind of ritual, says the New York Herald. This has come down to us from the ages when our forebears first pushed their way out of the dry tablelands of civilization. Even the mighty power of the churches has not been able to brush aside some practices that have their roots deep in paganism.

Old Customs That Continue.

Probably after Halloween and Christmas there is no festival of the year so girt about with long-established customs as New Year's day. Among the best known of these are the auguries drawn from what was called the "Candlemas bull." In Scotland and other northern countries the term Candlemas, given to this season of the year, is supposed to have had its origin in religious ceremonies performed by candle light. The candles used were very large and highly ornamented, and were brought in at the midnight hour to the assembled guests, who, since the falling of dusk, had been drinking freely of the wassail bowl. Then, in procession, they marched out into the night, and to their imaginations the passing clouds assumed the shape of a bull. From the rise and fall and general motions of these clouds the seer foretold good or bad weather. Sometimes, too, auguries for the future were gathered from the state of the atmosphere on New Year's Eve, and also from the force and character of the wind.

In the imagination of most primitive peoples, especially those of the North, who were forced to battle against the elements of nature for life and sustenance, the eyes of great

feasts were considered occasions when the spirits of good and evil were in deadly conflict. The moment of midnight on New Year's Eve was always considered a time of special activity for the spirits of evil. In order to overcome them holier and more powerful influences had to be invoked. The evil spirits, or genii, as can be gathered from the Icelandic and Anglo-Saxon folklore, and even from words in their dialect, could be overcome by an appeal to the good genii, the hohmen, or hillmen.

Probably imported from Italy was the superstition that, on New Year's Eve the "evil eye" was all the more malignant. Then, too, there was a widespread practice of the "seeking of mete or drynke by nights on the benche to fede Allholde or Gobyln." In some of the dialogues of the famous medieval morality play, "Dives and Pauper," we find mention of this and many other New Year's customs intended to counteract the activities of the forces of evil.

Christmas Cheer Continued.

Perhaps what contributed most to this general fear of sinister influences was the deep drinking among the people, which continued almost unintermittently from Christmas until New Year's day. Up to the ninth century, except in the Syrian and Coptic churches, New Year's was not celebrated as a special feast day, but was looked upon as merely the octave of Christmas. Therefore the Christmas cheer was continued throughout the entire octave without abatement. It flickered up for the last time on New Year's day, as is clear from the one hundred and ninety-eighth sermon of Augustine, bishop of Hippo.

In England on New Year's Eve the young women went about carrying the "wassail bowl" and singing from door to door certain verses—a custom which had much in common with the hogmanay practice in Scotland. Here, the strange brew which in that country was carried about in the streets at midnight, was composed of ale, spirits, sugar, nutmeg or cinnamon. It was a powerful potion, the effects of which were almost immediately evident. Ritson in a collection of ancient songs gives us a few sung to the quaffings of this "prince of liquors, old or new." One such is:

A jolly wassail bowl,
A wassail of good ale,
Well fare the butler's soul
That setteth this to sale;
Out jolly wassail!

Notwithstanding the opposition which it has met since the year 1811, when many abuses were discovered in the practice, the custom of hurrying first across the threshold of his sweetheart has been practiced by many a young lad in Anglo-Saxon countries. The young lady listened attentively from the time the midnight bells ceased to ring to catch the first footfall on the floor.

The welfare of the family, particularly the fairer portion of it, was supposed to depend upon the character of the first comer after the midnight hour had sounded. Great care was taken to exclude all improper persons, especially as the midnight intruder enjoyed the privilege of imprinting a "hearty kiss" on the lips of the expectant lassie.

Bestowing Gifts.

The custom of bestowing gifts has become so inextricably linked with the New Year's celebrations in Paris that New Year's day is still called the Jour d'Estrennes. This custom seems to have had its rise in the conduct of the nobles of the late Middle Ages, who were in the habit of bestowing gifts upon their sovereign. Naturally the ruler, not wishing to remain under obligations to them, returned the gift in a princely fashion. In England, however, especially in the time of Queen Elizabeth, this custom became so burdensome that it occasioned general protest among the nobles. "Good Queen Bess" was not slow to indicate just what kind of gifts she expected, or rather exacted. She let it be known also what consequences would follow the withholding of the jewels and the silks which she looked for at the hands of her subjects. She was so niggardly in her own gifts that we can understand how the custom fell into disuse and in the time of George IV was abandoned.

The giving of gifts was also very common among the people. On Christmas, and often on St. Stephen's day, employers, parents and masters presented Christmas boxes to their dependents. It was a form of Christmas charity. On New Year's day, however, gifts were exchanged between friends and acquaintances as a sign of good will. This custom, perhaps, had its origin in the box which was taken aboard every vessel that sailed out of port during the octave of Christmas and which was not to be opened until the return of the vessel. Contributions were to be dropped into this box, large or small, according as the day had been propitious or otherwise. The person to whom the contents of the box were given was supposed to have a mass said for the mariners who had made the gift. Hence the name of "Christmas boxes," which were given up to and including New Year's day. Each one of these days became known as "boxing day."

JANUARY FIRST DRAWS NEAR.

The light and airy manner
He had some weeks ago
Has passed from him completely.
His heart is filled with woe,
For that day is approaching
He great dreads to see,
When Friend Wife will remind him
Of promises that he
Has made—those resolutions
That will be hard to keep,
Requiring such an effort,
'Twould make an angel weep.

A QUESTION OF CLIMATE

By WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

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COLONEL MORRISON had three initials, so the town naturally called him "Alphabetical" Morrison, and dropped the "Colonel." He came to our part of the country in an early day—he used to explain that they caught him in the trees, when he was drinking creek water, eating sheep-sorrel and running wild with a buffalo tail for a trolley, and that the first thing they did, after teaching him to eat out of a plate, was to set him at work in the grading gang that was laying out the Cottonwood and Walnut rivers and putting the limestone in the hills. He was one of the original five patriots who laid out the Corn Belt railroad from the Mississippi to the Pacific, and was appointed one of that committee to take the matter to New York for the inspection of capitalists, and he it said to the credit of Alphabetical Morrison that he was the only person in the crowd with money enough to pay the ferryman when he reached the Missouri river, though he had only enough to get himself across. But in spite of that the road was built, and though it missed our town, it was because we didn't vote the bonds, though old Alphabetical went through the county, roaring in the school-houses, bellowing at the crossroads, and doing all that a good, honest pair of lungs could do for the cause. However, he was not dismayed at his failure, and began immediately to organize a company to build another road. We finally secured a railroad, though it was only a branch.

Over his office door he had a sign—"Land Office"—painted on the false board front of the building in letters as big as a cow, and the first our newspaper knew of him was twenty years ago, when he brought in an order for some stationery for the Commercial club. At that time we had not heard that the town supported a Commercial club—nor had anyone else heard of it, for that matter—for old Alphabetical was the president, and his bookkeeper, with the Miss dropped off her name, was secretary. But he had a wonderfully alluring letterhead printed, and seemed to get results, for he made a living while his competitors starved. Later, when he found time, he organized a real Commercial club, and had himself elected president of it. He used to call meetings of the club to discuss things, but as no one cared much for his monologues on the future of the town, the attendance was often light. He issued circulars referring to our village as "the Queen City of the Prairies," and on the circulars was a map, showing that the Queen City of the Prairies was "the railroad axis of the West." There was one road running into the town; the others old Alphabetical indicated with dotted lines, and explained they were in process of construction.

He became possessed of a theory that a canning factory would pay in the Queen City of the Prairies, and the first step he took toward building it was to invest in a high hat, a long coat and white vest, and a pair of mouse-colored trousers. With these and his theory he went East and returned with a contract. The canning factory went up, but the railroad rates went wrong, and the factory was never opened. Alphabetical blinked at it through his gold-rimmed glasses for a few weeks, and then organized a company to turn it into a woolen mill. He elected himself president of that company and used to bring around to our paper notices of directors' meetings, and while he was in the office he would insist that we devoted too much space to idle gossip and not enough to the commercial and industrial interests of the Queen City.

At times he would bring in an editorial that he had written himself, highly excited and full of cyclonic language, and if we printed it Alphabetical would buy a hundred copies of the paper containing it and send them east. His office desk gradually filled with woodcuts and zinc etchings of buildings that never existed save in his dear old head, and about twice a year during the boom days he would bring them around and have a circular printed on which were the pictures showing the imaginary public buildings and theoretical business thoroughfares of the Queen City.

The woolen mill naturally didn't pay, and he persuaded some eastern capitalists to install an electric plant in the building and put a street-car line in the town, though the longest distance from one side of the place to the other was less than ten blocks. But Alphabetical was enthusiastic about it, and had the governor come down to drive the first spike. It was gold-plated, and Alphabetical pulled it up and used it for a paper-weight in his office for many years, and it is now the only reminder there is in town of the street railway, except a hard ridge of earth over the ties in the middle of Main street. When someone twitted him on the failure of the street railway he made answer:

"Of course it failed; here I go pawing up the earth, milking out the surplus capital of the effete East, and building up this town—and what happens? Four thousand old slurlian folks comb the moss on the north side of 'em, with mussel shell, and turn

over and yawp that old Alphabetical is visionary. Here I can get a canning factory and nobody eats the goods; I hustle up a woolen factory, and the community quits wearing trousers; I build for them a street-car line to haul them to and from their palatial residences, and what do the sun-baked human mud-turtles do but all jump off the log into the water and hide from them cars like they were chariots of fire? What this town needs is not factories, nor railroads, nor modern improvements—Old Alphabetical can get them—but the next great scheme I go into is to go down the river, get some good red mud, and make a few thousand men who will build up a town."

It has been fifteen years and over since Colonel Morrison put on his long coat and high hat and started for the money markets of the East, seeking whom he might devour. At the close of the eighties the Colonel and all his tribe found that the stock of eastern capitalists who were ready to pay good prices for the fine shimmering blue sky and bracing ozone of the West was running low. It was said in town that the Colonel had come to the end of his string, for not only were the doors of capital closed to him in the East, but newcomers had stopped looking for farms at home. There was nothing to do but to sit down and swap jack-knives with other land agents, and as they had taken most of the agencies for the best insurance companies while the Colonel was on dress parade, there was nothing left for him to do but to run for justice of the peace, and, being elected, do what he could to make his tenure for life.

Though he was elected, more out of gratitude for what he had tried to do for the town than because people thought he would make a fair judge, he got no further than his office in popular esteem. He did not seem to wear well with the people in the daily run and jostle of life. During the forty years he has been in our town, he has lived most of the time apart from the people—transacting his business in the East, or locating strangers on new lands. He has not been one of us, and there were stories afloat that his shrewdness had sometimes caused him to thrust a toe over the dead-line of exact honesty. In the town he never helped us to fight for

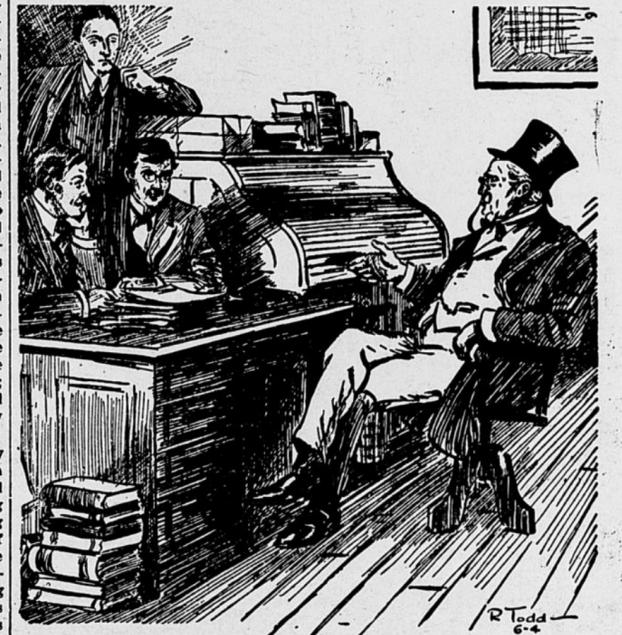
square board building at the end of the street. But every day for the past ten years he has been coming to our office for his bundle of old newspapers. These he reads carefully, and sometimes what he reads inspires him to write something for our paper on the future of the Queen City, though much oftener his articles are retrospective. He is the president of the Old Settlers' society, and once or twice a year he brings in an obituary which he has written for the family of some old-timer.

One would think that an idler would be a nuisance in a busy place, but, on the contrary, we all like old Alphabetical around our office. For he is an old man who has not grown sour. His smooth, fat face has not been wrinkled by the vinegar of failure, and the noise that came from his lusty lungs in the old days is subsiding. But he has never forgiven General Durham, of the Statesman, for saying of a fight between Alphabetical and another land agent back in the sixties that "those who heard it pronounced it the most vocal engagement they had ever known." That is why he brings his obituaries to us; that is why he does us the honor of borrowing papers from us; and that is why, on a dull afternoon, he likes to sit in the old sway-back swivel-chair and tell us his theory of the increase in the rainfall, his notion about the influence of trees upon the hot winds, his opinion of the disappearance of the grasshoppers. Also, that is why we always save a circus ticket for old Alphabetical, just as we save one for each of the boys in the office.

One day he came into the office in a bad humor. He picked up a country paper, glanced it over, threw it down, kicked from under his feet a dog that had followed a subscriber into the room, and slammed his hat into the waste-basket with considerable feeling as he picked up a New York paper.

"Well—well, what's the matter with the Judiciary this morning?" someone asked the old man.

He did not reply at once, but turned his paper over and over, apparently looking for something to interest him. Gradually the revolutions of his paper became slower and slower, and finally he stopped turning the paper and began reading. It was ten



"He Likes to Sit in the Old Swayback Swivel Chair and Tell Us His Theory of the Increase in the Rainfall."

those things of which the town is really proud: our schools, the college, the municipal ownership of electric lights and waterworks, the public library, the abolition of the saloon, and all of the dozen small matters of public interest in which good citizens take a pride. Colonel Morrison was living his grand life, in his tailor-made clothes, while his townsmen were out with their coats off making our town the substantial place it is. So in his latter days he is old Alphabetical Morrison, a man apart from us. We like him well enough, and so long as he cares to be justice of the peace no one will object, for that is his due. But, somehow, there is no talk of making him county clerk; and there is a reason in everybody's mind why no party names him to run for county treasurer. He has been trying hard enough for ten years to break through the crust of the common interests that he has so long ignored. One sees him at public meetings—a rather wistful-looking, chubby-faced old man—on the edge of a crowd, ready to be called out for a speech. But no one calls his name; no one cares particularly what old Alphabetical has to say. Long ago he said all that he can say to our people.

The only thing that Alphabetical ever organized that paid was a family. In the early days he managed to get a home clear of indebtedness and was shrewd enough to keep it out of all of his transactions. Tow-headed Morrisons filled the schoolhouse, and twenty years later there were so many of his girls teaching school that the school board had to make a ruling limiting the number of teachers from one family in the city school, in order to force the young Morrison girls to go to the country to teach. In these days the girls keep the house going and Alphabetical is a notary public and a justice of the peace, which keeps his office going in the little

or fifteen minutes before he spoke. When he put down the paper his cherubic face was beaming, and he said:

"Oh—I know I'm a fool, but I wish the Lord had sent me to live in a town large enough so that every dirty-faced brat on the street wouldn't feel he had a right to call me 'Alphabetical'! Damn it, I've done the best I could! I haven't made any alarming success. I know it. There's no need of rubbing it in on me." He was silent for a time with his hands on his knees and his head thrown back, looking at the ceiling. Almost imperceptibly a smile began to crack his features, and when he turned his eyes to the man at the desk, they were dancing with merriment, as he said; "Just been reading a piece here in the Sun about the influence of climate on human endeavor. It says that in northern latitudes there is more oxygen in the air and folks breathe faster, and their blood flows faster, and that keeps their liver going. Trouble with me has always been climate—sluggish liver. If I had just a little more oxygen floating round in my system, the woolen mill would still be running, the street cars would be going, and this town would have had forty thousand inhabitants. My fatal mistake was one of latitude. But"—and he drawled out the word mockingly—"but I guess if the Lord had wanted me to make a town here He would have given me a different kind of liver!" He slapped his knees as he sighed; "This is a funny world, and the more you see of it the funnier it gets." The old man grinned complacently at the ceiling for a minute, and before getting out of his chair kicked his shoe-heels together merrily, wiped his glasses as he rose, put his bundle of papers under his arm, and left the office whistling an old, old-fashioned tune.