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Tabula Rasa.

Time breaks.
Hist, morsels! I am Time!
In every clime
Ye know me by the scythe I bear
Ye know me by the front I wear
Since man first set his foot upon this earth,
Lo! I have marked each puny birth;
And I have doled the sum of passing years
In patience and in tears
Such as an old man weeps
When he his lone watch keeps
O'er what, perchance, had better not have
been,
So full it seems of want and woe and sin.

The gift of years is mine:
Ambassador divine,
I hold for you my subtle glass;
I give each year, and watch it pass.
Oh, that ye knew their sweet and priceless
worth,
These years of heavenly birth!
Oh, that ye might receive them thus! But
no,
Weakly ye let them go,
Madly you sell the page,
In every hour and age,
Until I find, world cry for Justice's sword,
And proud of the wrath of an offended Lord.
Once more the hour is here!
Another year!
Is slipping through my trembling hands,
That fain would stay the fluttering shades,
Save that I know its worth to you who live,
The boon that Mercy deigns to give.
I beg you now to hear Time's patient prayer;
Behold the scroll is white,
Thereon inscribe such deeds
That when the old man reads,
His voice may cry at last, "Let vengeance
cease;
Their hearts are turned to joy and love and
peace."
—Harper's Weekly.

"AT HOME."

A STORY OF NEW YEAR'S DAY.

"Peep into the library—do, father—and see the dear girls. What a picture they make!"
Mr. Bell downtown was a man much respected as a rich, successful merchant, much feared as an over-shrewd financier; uptown, in his own house, he was just "father." Mrs. Bell, a comely, stout, blonde matron, had let her whole soul overflow on the little bald head of her first baby. Successive babies brought more outpouring of inexhaustible affection and indulgence. She was content as a brooding dove to be only "mother," and that Mr. Bell could ask greater glory or honor than to be "father," why, the idea was absurd. So absurd that it never came into his mind. On tiptoe he obeyed his wife's injunction and looked in at the library door.
"What are they doing?" he asked, in a whisper.
"Directing envelopes for the New Year's cards—the invitations to call, you know."
They were certainly pretty, those three girls, with their slender forms thrown into graceful, unrestrained attitudes, as they sat about the library table eagerly talking and busily writing. They were respectively nineteen, eighteen and sixteen years old; and called respectively Jo or Josie for Josephine, Sissy for Cecilia, and Tiny for Christina. These were their home pet names, to be sure, but following a custom that obtains nowadays, they chose to be known by these diminutives outside in the fashionable world. The great society paper described them as "three Graces shading in styles of beauty from Miss Josie's brunette brilliancy, through Miss Sissy's brown-haired, blue-eyed bewilderment, to Miss Tiny's moonlight blondeness." The description was considered accurate as well as extremely poetical, and Mrs. Bell had asked the reporter to lunch. Josie read off names from a list, the other two sisters wrote, and a fourth—a mite called Poppet—nearly piled up envelopes.
"Let's see," said Poppet—"the A's, P's, G's—all done down to the M's, Morse, Morris, McIntyre, Mumford."
Sissy, who was biting her pen-handle in deep reflection, and had turned up her blue eyes to the ceiling until she looked like the saint whose name she bore, interrupted just here with,
"Jo, didn't we meet a Montgomery somewhere?"
"Montgomery? No. Yes; there was somebody of that name, it seems to me, at Saratoga."
"I remember," exclaimed Tiny, getting upon her knees in a chair like a child, and stretching well across the table, "somebody, I've forgotten who, brought him up to us one day on the piazza, and said he was an agreeable man who lounged about the office and seemed to have no friends."
"Oh, ye—s," said Josie, with uncertainty; "and I think he spoke of being at the Windsor, in New York. Direct him an envelope, Sissy."
"But, Josie, asked Tiny, "do we know him?"
"Nonsense, child; people aren't so exact at New Year's. And we must have a lot of calls. Three girls of us; why, less than two or three hundred calls would be a disgrace."
"Of course," said Sissy, with a sense of the gravest responsibility; "and to secure that number we must send out at least twice as many invitations. There, Mr. Montgomery, Windsor Hotel. It may not find him, but there's a chance, and every one counts." She threw the directed envelope among the others that were ready to be stamped and mailed.
"Well, my pets," Mr. Bell asked, as he came in and looked down at the pretty group in fond pride, "where are all these cards to be sent?"
"Oh, papa," exclaimed Jo, "now just run away—we're so busy."
"Now, papa!"—and Sissy jumped up and kissed him—"do be a docile parent, there's a dear."
"Yes, and don't disturb us," added Miss Tiny, clapping her hand over a pile of envelopes to protect them from scrutiny.

Mr. Bell looked amused, patted their heads all around, and observed, in a mildly reproving way, as he saw about one-quarter of the number to be sent, "It seems to me there are a great many."
"It's all right, papa; we know the customs of society," came the reassuring chorus.
"We know the cut-throat of thicketly perfectly," echoed in a shrill solo from Poppet, who at present lisps, being minus one milk-tooth in front, but who will shortly be known to the newspapers as "the piquant Miss Poppet Bell."
Then all the girls jump up and make a dash at papa, and in a few moments a handsome old gentleman, very merry and very proud of his handsome and merry girls, makes a feat of having been ejected with great violence from the library, and the door is closed and locked on the inside.
Mr. Bell can hardly stop laughing to say to his wife, "I suppose you know all about the cards sent out?"
"Oh, no," she answers, placidly; "I leave social matters to the girls. They're great favorites, father, and very attractive. The number of friends they have is astonishing. It's all right."
By force of example, Mr. Bell echoes cheerfully, "Oh, yes, it's all right."
The girls of Year's day there was a very rainbow of girls in the Bell drawing-room. Such filmy, dainty-lined dresses, such bright cheeks and eyes, such a bewildering tangle of glossy hair never before shimmered around a prosperous, beaming old father. Mr. Bell was so apt to be late downtown, or deeply absorbed in business schemes, or "seeing a man" in the library during the evening, that he had seldom met his daughters in grand toilet, and had never realized what radiant creatures they were, and that uptown he was chiefly known as "the Bell girls' father." He himself, in full dress and a light overcoat, was complimented by his eldest daughter as "just too sweet for anything." Then he jumped into the carriage, consulted a formidable list, and began the day's work.
The first caller at the house was old Mr. Crump—"nobody at all, you know; just a friend of mamma's ages ago, when she was young," as Sissy remarked.
"Ah," exclaimed Mrs. Bell, with rapture, as she was entertaining him, "my dear girls are quite leaders of society."
"Yes, madame," answered the ridiculous old party; "and we live in the only country in the world where a mother can make such a boast of children in their teens."
"I know it," responded the mother, with a sigh of pious contentment, "and I'm devoutly grateful for our free institutions."
"Free and easy institutions," Mr. Crump suggested; then pinching Poppet's cheek, he asked, "Well, small child, and what do you do on New Year's day?"
"Oh, I retrieve all day long. It is quite tireless," said Poppet, gravely.
Crump, as he gave a hasty farewell nod, made some strange noise under his breath. Josie thought it was a groan, but Tiny, who stood nearest, said, "It was a swear, an awful swear."
"I think," said Poppet, "he is th dreffully poky and hatin' my tittle." The early calls were mostly from very young men, solemn under a sense of juvenility, or hilarious and kindly patronizing toward elder people.
At 11 o'clock Josie whispered to Sissy: "What a bore! I hate boys!"
By noon old married men and the heads of families hurried in, paid elaborate compliments, declared that Mrs. Bell had grown a day older in twenty years; then made off, checking against the name "Bell" in a business-like way just at the carriage door.
"At last!" exclaimed Josie about 1 o'clock—"at last the marriageable men are coming."
They came by dozens—men who led the German, men who drove their own "four-in-hands," men who lounged about clubs, men who had "seen life" in Paris, and watched talkative young girls with a sinister interest.
Rather late in the afternoon Mrs. Bell became so pleased with a tall, handsome, dark-haired man of about thirty-five, who spoke in a mellow voice and with an English intonation, that she contrived to whisper to Josie, "What's his name?"
"I'm sure I don't know, mamma," answered the young lady, gayly. "There are dozens here whose faces even I can't recall."
"Oh, yes," Sissy chimed in with a languid smile, "we sent so many cards, you know."
Mrs. Bell, who had begun to feel he would make an ideal son-in-law, said to the gentleman, with a proper preamble, "It is unparadise, but we have really forgotten your name."
"Montgomery," he suavely replied. "Your card came to my hotel—the Windsor."
"Oh, yes, certainly, of course. The girls sent out a great many. Pleasant custom, isn't it?"
"Charming custom," answered Mr. Montgomery, "so convenient—that is, I mean so—so cordial." His eyes were fixed in a horrible stare directly over Mrs. Bell's shoulder, and he hurriedly offered his arm. "My dear madame" (he stammered dreadfully), "will you permit me to admire" (he jerked out the words) "the works of art in the next room?"
Mrs. Bell turned about to see at what he was staring in that ghastly way, and found standing behind her nothing worse than a short, stout man of forty or so, with a florid countenance, and a pleasant smile upon it, who was waiting to pay his New Year's compliment. That duly received, she took Mr. Montgomery's proffered arm, and went into the next room to view a large oil painting. The stout gentleman followed them, and cheerfully

offered the remark, "Fine picture." Mr. Montgomery dashed off to a corner where there was a piece of statuary. The stout man dashed off to the corner also, and gave the opinion, "Fine statue."
"Poppet," whispered Mrs. Bell, beckoning the child to her, "go and ask Josie his gentleman's name."
Meanwhile he was delivering quite a little lecture on art. "The wonderful permanency of works in marble renders them of value to the historian; they are, so to speak, petrified history," he said, blandly.
Poppet came running back, and said, in capital imitation of her elders, "We really can't say who everybody it's."
Mr. Montgomery's attention seemed fixed on a fine etching that hung near the open door, and he went toward it. The stout person performed a sort of quadrille figure in front of him all the way, and stationed himself on the threshold. Montgomery attempted to cross that threshold; a fat hand met his advancing shoulder, and the words, "Oh, no!" very gently spoken, met his ear.
The words were evidently softer than the grasp; for at the moment the three girls and a train of callers were passing through to the dining-room, where a collation was spread, and Mr. Montgomery staggered back, violently propelled by that plump hand. The rude stout man seemed about to speak with great vehemence, but he looked into the faces of the three young girls in succession, and down into Poppet's innocent, wide-opened eyes. Then he laughed, and said, "Why, ladies, here's a fortunate meeting; this gentleman has forgotten me, but I know him." Montgomery looked something like an upright corpse. "I've been looking for him a long time. Why, Charles, he put off his hand—'don't you remember?' Montgomery was still unready to see. "Don't you remember—your brother Jack?"
Then the stout man seized the younger one's hand, wrung it, and laughed again in the heartiest way imaginable. The newly found Charles stepped forward, looked about wildly, then finally ejaculated, "Jack! Oh, yes, Jack!"
"Your brother Jack?"
"Yes, how'd you do?"
Mrs. Bell murmured in happy sympathy, "How fortunate! what a delightful meeting!" and the girls chirped like little birds about the wonderful scene, while the brothers spoke quietly apart.
That that moment hearty Mr. Jack's devotion to his newly found relative knew no bounds. Arm in arm they went to the refreshment table. Charles had a singularly small appetite, but Jack ate enough for both, and remarked with solicitude, "Charles was never very strong—always liable to turn pale—break down—eh, old boy, weren't you?"
"Yes, oh, ye—yes," answered Charles.
"Why," exclaimed Sissy, "it's quite wonderful! How did you know your brother was here?"
"Why," said Jack, still holding Charles's arm, "I traced him to the Windsor, and seeing your card in his room, followed here on the chance of finding him, and also" (with a gallant bow) "of paying my respects to some American ladies."
It was about 1 o'clock, and the calling had fallen off as the wretched victims of the day's pleasure took the usual dinner-time for a breathing space before the evening's rush and hurry. In fact, not a visitor remained except the happy reunited brothers, and Jack proposed, "Now, Charles, let us go."
Charles refused flatly, and asked permission to see the conservatory—a fragrant little bower at the extreme end of the long vista of connecting rooms. The ladies assented, and the cheerful brother Jack followed close.
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