Literature.

A MODERN MIRACLE.

It was the last day of the old year. London had recovered from its Christmas festivities—and their after-effects—and preparing to see the new year ln.

In the misty hours of the December afternoon, two young men were gazing through the windows of a Piccardilly club at the people who were hurrying up and down that popular thoroughfare.

"Well, Densham," said the younger and darker of the two, "are you meditating any lofty and noble resolutions for the new year?"

"I am afraid that is not much in my line," replied Lord Densham in a slightly affected tone. Why do you ask? Are you going to turn over a new leaf, as our spiritual pastors and masters call it?"

"I've turned over many new leaves," cried Cecil Brairley, lightly; "but the same old tales, the same moth-eaten jokes of fate, seem to be written on all of them. No two years are the same, but they are beastly similiar."

"Ah, Brairley, I am thinking of making a great alteration," said Densham, who was evidently in a communicative, though serious mood.

"Really! Are you going to change your tailor, or only to let your mustache grow."

"Don't be flippant," said his lordship in quite a melancholy tone. "The fact is, Briarley, old boy, I'm in a hole!"

"You in a hole! It's not money?"

"Of course not—it wouldn't be much use coming to you if it were, would it? No, I'm going to get married." This was drawled out slowly and with a deep sigh, as though the speaker felt he was making some mighty sacrifice for the benefit of humanity.

"I thought you looked jolly blue about something; but wherefore the hole?" asked Briarley. "Nobody compels you."

"My dear boy, everybody compels me," said Densham, gazing thoughtfully at his white and well-kept hands and finger nails, and adding pathetically, "Of course you don't know what it is to be highly eligible."

"No," replied Briarley with a grim smile.

"But, unfortunately, I shall have to marry in self-defence," proceeded his lordship taking no notice of his friend's remark. "It is sickening to feel that you are being run after by all the girls and match-making mammas."

"Poor, poor, Densham," murmured Briarley. "No wonder you are in a hole."

"Yes, but the worst of it is that I've fixed on two girls, and I can't for the life of me decide which of them to have."

"And who are the favored couple between whom Paris the Second has to judge?"

"One is Daisy Molyneux—the lively little thing with the blue eyes and the good figure, you know. Of course she is very jolly and awfully fond of me—"

"Yes; and the other?"

"The other is Sybil Castlemaine."

"Who?"

"Sybil Castlemaine, your—er—second cousin. isn't she?"

"Good heavens!" muttered Briarley.

"What did you say?"

"Nothing. Do you think Sybil cares for you?"

"I am afraid there is not much doubt of it, old man," said his lordship, mournfully, as he languidly stroked his clean-shaven chin. "I used to fancy you were rather fond of her at one time, but, of course, it is impossible."

Utterly!"

"Well, look here, old chap, I shouldn't ask everybody, but which of the two girls do you advise me to have?"

Can't you have both?" asked Cecil, rather savagely.

"Now, come on, old fellow, give me your honest opinion. They're both nice, loving little girls, and its an awful bore to have to choose. Which would you ask?"

"Well," said Briarley, slowly, and with a bitterness his companion did not appear to see, "it certainly is incredible that any girl could refuse the honor and privilege of being Lady Densham, wearing the Densham diamonds, and sharing the Densham celebrity. The only wonder is that you have been permitted to enjoy your liberty so long. I should advise you to have Daisy Molyneux."

"Not your cousin?"

"No; she would not suit you nearly as well as Miss Mollyneux would."

"Thanks awfully, old chap; I only just need an impartial opinion like yours to help me decide. I'll propose to Daisy tonight; she is going to be at Lady Vivyan's dance—and so is Sybil, so I can get it settled either way. Will you be there?"

"Yes, I expect to."

"Right, then I shall see you later."

As Cecil Briarley watched the retreating figure of the wealthy and coronated friend who was overburdened with unsought affections, and didn't know which of two maidens he really loved, he summed up the situation in one word which he muttered very low, and with heartfelt sincerity. No one heard it, but it is safe to conjecture that it was a syllable of most emphatic disapproval.

Lady Vivyan's rooms presented a gay and brilliant scene that evening. To welcome the new year with dancing and revelry, with music and mirth, was, perhaps, typical of the giddy social whirl in which hostess and guests revolved in their more or less important positions; but, after all, every day, every hour starts a new year, and it is only sentiment and commercial convenience that settles on one particular chime as marking the commencement of another circle.

Lord Densham arrived early. He was attired with his usual care and correctness, and he wore also an air of determination that suited him very well. It displaced the appearance of indifference and listlessness which usually made the hereditary legislator look limp and flabby. He speedily discovered that both Daisy Molyneux and Sybil Castlemaine had come, and with a sigh of relief to think that his decision was at last made, he proceeded to see out Miss Molyneux that he might acquaint her with the honor he proposed to do her.

It was considerably later when Cecil Briarley arrived. He was not in the best of spirits, and did not intend to do much dancing. One of the first persons he noticed was his own cousin.

"What, Sybil—you not dancing?"

"How are you, Cecil? No, I haven't been here long."

"Shall we sit down somewhere until someone comes and claims you?"

"By all means; it is quite a long time since I've had the chance of talking to you, Cecil.

Have you ever heard of Tantalus?" asked her cousin, as he led her to a secluded corner.

"Who was he? An ancient god, wasn't he?" replied Miss Castlemaine. "Was he a relative of Bacchus? The spirit decanters are named after him."

"No," said Cecil, very seriously. "He was a young man who longed for a certain prize, and it was just out of his reach."

"And this is apropos of what?" inquired Sybil.

"Tantalus would have been happier if his prize had been out of his sight as well as out of his reach."

"Why can't you talk like a rational being, Cecil?"

"I only wanted to say that in order to escape the madness of Tantalus, I have been letting my prize go out of sight. They are waltzing very nicely," he added, drawing her attention to one of the couples who were floating near them.

"Lord Densham and Daisy Molyneux?"

"Yes. Densham's a nice fellow, isn't he?"

"Ye-es. I suppose one would hardly call him shy or modest, would one?"

Her merry brown eyes looked up into his, but they didn't find any responsive twinkle.

"He has no need for modesty; he knows his worth."

"Every bit of it!" said Sybil.

"Yes: but when a fellow like that can choose any girl he likes—when he knows they are all like pretty apples asking to be plucked, it is enough to make him conceited."

"And other fellows jealous!" added Sybil mischievously.

"And I suppose none of the pretty apples can be strong enough to refuse to fall into his hand?"

"It would be a modern miracle if they did."

"Then the age of miracles has not yet gone," said Sybil, nodding gayly to him, as Lady Vivyan came up and introduced a new partner to her.

A little later Briarley was trying to soothe his feelings with a cigarette in the smoking-room, when Lord Densham came up to him.

"I say, old chap, a funny thing has happened. She has refused me."

"Who has?"

"Why, Daisy Molyneux."

"By Jove! Were any signs of insanity ever noticed in the family before?" asked Cecil.

"No, I believe not," answered the peer, failing, as usual, to see any sarcasm in the question. "I tried to point out to her what it meant, but she stuck to it. Nice little girl, too."

"Well, I'm awfully sorry, Densham, really I am."

"It doesn't matter so very much; Miss Castlemaine is here, isn't she? You see, I can ask her and get it settled."

"Of course you can," said Cecil, with a trace of bitterness in his voice.

"I think I'll go and find her. I'm rather sorry I wasted my time over that silly girl, but it was your advice. Anyway it makes my choice much easier."

As he walked off Cecil Briarley watched him, and although he was not a man given to the use of bad language, it is a lamentable fact that a little word before referred to slipped with terrible earnestness from his lips.

When Lord Densham suggested to Sybil Castlemaine that they should sit the dance out in the conservatory, she saw that he meant to propose to her, and his lordship perceived that, under the circumstanced, there was nothing to be gained by beating about the bush, and so he quickly led up to the business he had come to negotiate.

"It is rather serious to be standing on the edge of a new year, don't you think so, Miss Castlemaine? It makes one think."

"Really?" said Sybil, arching her pretty eyebrows.

"Yes; one looks at the past and then at the future, you know. Now take me for example," he went on, plunging into his carefully prepared and already rehearsed speech. "With money and good connections one can get on very well in life; but, after all, it is very little. There is something more that is wanted, and surely to supply that want would be the fittest way of starting a new year. Dear Miss Castlemaine, I want to be a better man in the future than in the past, and you, only you, can help me. What is need to make my happiness complete, to crown my hopes, and perfect my manhood, is a woman's love. Sybil—let me call you Sybil, my love—will you be that woman? Will you marry me?"

In the seclusion of the conservatory he opened his arms a little, as though he expected her to creep in, and he expanded his chest to receive the burden of the dainty little head that was to nestle gently on it. But it was a night of surprises.

"I am very sorry you should have asked me this, Lord Densham," said Sybil, gravely. "I am conscious of the vastness of the compliment, and I am not blind to the advantages and attractions of your offer, but I do not love you."

"You don't love me?" repeated his lordship, in a tone of disappointment, that had a suspicion of incredulity in it. "You don't love me? But surely that is only a matter of time; when you have seen more of me, when you know me better Sybil ——"

My decision would not alter, Lord Densham."

"But you are quite sure——"

"I quite realize what I am losing," said Sybil, calmly, "and although I know how good it is of you to suggest it, I don't really think I could make you any better, or anything but what you are, either in the new year, or at any other time."

"But you could. Miss Castlemaine; you ——"

"Would you please take me back? I am engaged for the next dance."

With a wonderful smile on his lips, in which mortification, pity and surprise were blended, he politely offered her his arm and led her back to the ball-room. As they entered it, they almost ran into Cecil Briarley. He was about to walk past them when Sybil said:

"Oh, Cecil, here you are! You're just in time."

Densham yielded her up with his customary smile; and Cecil whispered:

"I was not going to claim you for this dance; I thought you would prefer to sit out with him."

"With him? Why?

"I—er—I believe he has a question he wants to ask you."

"I don't think he has," said Sybil, quietly.

They were about to join the dancers when it was announced that the mystic midnight moment had almost arrived and those who cared to do so were to go to the open windows and on to the doorsteps and the balconies, to listen and wait for the solemn peal that was to mark the annual recommencement. Briarley got a wrap to throw over his cousin's shoulders, and then they went to the further corner of the long balcony.

It was a clear, frosty night, and the stars and moon were shining with a brightness that reflected in the hoar frost on the grass and trees, illuminated the dark hour with a soft, poetic light. Cecil stood silently by Sybil's side for some seconds, and then he whispered:

"And is this beautiful night making you thoughtful, too?"

"No," said Sybil, with her face turned a little from him. "No. I was thinking of Tantalus."

"Ah, poor Tantalus!" sighed Cecil. "I hope you pity him."

"I don't think I do," responded his cousin, softly, feeling glad that the shadows hid her blushing cheek. "Perhaps his prize was not so far out of his reach as he imagined."

Cecil may not have been rich in this world's goods, but he was not poor in imagination.

"Sybil, didn't Densham ask you anything?" he whispered.

"Yes, Cecil, and—and I performed a modern miracle."

"My darling!" and there was a silence.

"Sybil, you know I am not a rich man, and I am not a lord.

"And you are not horribly conceited and selfish either, dear."

He did not remove his arm, and a sudden hush of expectancy quieted the chattering party. Nothing was heard for a moment, and then from a dozen clanging clocks all around them boomed the birth of the new year.

One, two, three—ten, eleven, twelve.

"Sybil," whispered Briarley, "the old tarnished years are gone. Here's to the golden future."

X-Rays May Restore Reason to the Insane.

As the result of a number of experiments with X-rays in Chicago it is asserted that the rays are to become a medium through which reason may be restored to insane persons. It has been found that by the rays brain tumors, responsible for many cases of alienation of mind, can be located. Preparations are being made by several eminent physicians for a test operation in what has been considered an incurable case. The patient will be a wealthy young man, who for several years has been confined in the Kankakee Asylum. The patient has already been examined by the X-ray process. Those who conducted the experiment say that the skiagraphs plainly show a tumor pressing on the brain. The physicians claim that the removal of the tumor will not be dangerous, and they expect the young man's mind will be fully restored.

TEMPERANCE COLUMN.

Contributed by the I. O. G. T.

(Epropear edition of the New York Herald.)

ALCOHOLISM

Every period in modern history has had its visitation—famine, disease or war. At present we do not have to deplore an armed invasion—and, for that matter hostilities are now under the control of international law: neither is it disease that can make us tremble, for epidemics are foreseen overcome and contradicted from the start, and certainly famine is no longer redoubtabe. No these catclysms belong to the past. But we have no cause to boast, for we also have a public calamity in our midst, and to our shame it has arisen with our knowledge and spread its roots, thanks to our lack of energy. This curse of modern society whlch strikes deep into every class is alcoholism.

Alcohol must not be confounded with drunkeness. Drunkeness always existed but alcoholism, that passion of the masses for alcohol and its sad consequences for the individual, the family, the society at large, was almost unknown a hundred years ago.

How did this deadly passion take its rise? The dominant cause resides in the simple fact that formerly wine was dear and spirits anything but plentiful, whereas within the present century enormous quantities of alcohol have been dispensed everywhere. The result has been a perfect flood of distilled liquors all the world over, within the reach of the poorest.

Very cheap at first, alcohol rose in price owing to the heavy duties placed upon it. Yet the consumption did not diminish. The laborer, however poor, still intoxicates himself at cost of bitter privation to those dependent upon him.

Man seeks in the use of spirituous liquors that happy dream state which brings oblivion to worry and casts a roseate here over everything—not that condition of complete inebriation which sinks man lower than the beast but the agreeable sensation experienced after partaking of even a small quantity of alcohol and and which gives the illusions of unwonted strength and energy.

That is why the laborer exhausted by by his work and saddened by his present lot and gloomy future has recourse to alcohol as to a wizard, who by a stroke of his magic wand transports him beyond the borders of sordid reality. He does not stop to think, poor wretch, that the awakening will find him worse off than before.

Nor is the working class alone affected by alcoholism; intelligent and well educated people, who ought to set a good example, are also among its victims. The gin bottle accompanies the laborer, and the bottle Burgundy, Bordeau rum or cognac is to be found on many a table. It is present at many a ceremony, many a discussion and numberless insipid conversations. This friend which gradually steals away healah, reason and conscience is made the confident of projects, hopes, despair, joy and sorrow.

In Dr. Bienfiats, of Brussels, opinion alcohol is a physical, moral, intellectual and social poison.

Alcohol as a physical poison is quite notorious. Everybody has heard speak of acute alcoholism, chronic alcoholism, delirium tremens, and all the long lists of diseases induced by the absorption of liquor and that is not all. Many people in the best of health are stricken by alcoholic intoxication, and many patients succumb not to the disease from which they are suffering but to the insurmountable exhaustion produced by the use of spirits. They have so far diminished vital resistance that they cannot attain convalescence.

It could not be otherwise but an intellectual poison for the brain, which is the seat of memory, of thought, and of all the intellectual faculties is effected by alcohol. The power of thinking is affected, the intellectual faculties are obscured, judgment disappears and the final results is that many alcoholic subjects develop madness.

As a moral poison alcohol begins by weakening and undermining the will, at the same time obscures the moral faculties. Alcoholism is making rapid strides. Every day it goes a step forward and every day also the vegetative encroaches upon the intellectual existence. But on the other hand, what weakness it brings of every kind what loss of nobitity of sentiment, what baseness of character.