For the "Visitor"

THE PAST AND PRESENT.

BY W. A. R.

Another year has passed and gone,
Another year begins its dawn,
We greet the glad New Year;
The past has had its pain and woe,
Its pleasures, vanity and show,
With happiness and good cheer.

The year has fled to one and all,
The past we never can recall,
We would not if we could;
Its taught its lessons to each one,
Who learn, as days and minutes run
The evil or the good.

Some have enjoyed its reign full well,
While others sadness and trouble tell
Of the year now passed away;
Some have felt thankful for joy and health,
While others lived thoughtlessly in their wealth
Ungrateful from day to day.

Many have closed their eyes to earth,
Many a vacant seat 'round the hearth
Can never more be filled;
Many a loved one of home and friends
Have passed to the life which never ends,
Their earthly voices stilled.

Some have peacefully passed away,
And gone to the land of brighter day,
To praise their Lord and King;
While others have died as they lived—in sin,
Without hope in the Saviour, or entering in
Where ransomed voices sing.

Then, since the past we ne'er shall see
Till its record unfolds in eternity,
Let's work with heart and hand,
Lest *we* when the present year has fled
Look back with regret on time that's dead,
Recorded so to stand.

Selected Serial.

The Wife's Engagement Ring.

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

CHAPTER I.—(Continued).

He spoke angrily. His wife, who had drawn her hand within his arm, and was holding it tightly, made no reply.

"I found Bob Lawson singing a tipsy song among companions as tipsy as himself—and this, when he knew that his wife and children were starving at home! I was so angry that I could have struck him! Miserable, unfeeling wretch!"

He was growing hot in his indignation. Still, his wife made no answer; but he felt her hand clinging more closely to his arm, and there was something in the way she bore upon him that had a meaning in it, and that made him feel uncomfortable.

"Such a tender, loving, happy, fairy-like creature as she was when Bob married her! And to see what she is to-night!" he went on. "Just starved and broken-hearted! This is loving and cherishing with a vengeance!"

He felt something like a spasm in the arm which had drawn itself in his more tightly still—a spasm, and then a low shiver.

"This has been too much for you, I'm afraid, Annie," said Mr. Donaldson, growing concerned for his wife. "What's the matter? What makes you tremble so? Have you a chill?"

But she did not answer; only clung to him the more closely.

"Why, Annie, dear! What ails you? This strain has been altogether too great, and I don't wonder—enough to try the strongest nerves. I'm all upset myself; and you've had the worst of it."

Donaldson took hold of his wife's hand—the hand that was lying within his arm—and felt its coldness strike through the glove.

"Do you feel sick, or faint?" he asked, with increasing concern.

"No—no—" she replied, in a voice so strange that every familiar tone seemed to have gone out of it. "But all this is so dreadful! Poor Katy! She was such a dear, sweet, happy girl! And her husband was so fond of her when they were married; so proud and tender of his pretty little wife! I remember the loving way in which he used to look at her; it made me smile, sometimes, with the tears in my eyes to see it. And to think, Harry, that it is scarcely ten years since then!"

"It is dreadful to think of, Annie; and it would be impossible to imagine that such a transformation could take place were it not before our eyes."

"Such transformations are taking place every day," Mrs. Donaldson answered, her voice gaining in steadiness.

But her husband did not reply. She had struck a chord in his soul that sounded a note of alarm, and he felt, at the same time, the hot blood mounting to his face. The hand he had taken still lay in his. His only response was to grasp it tightly. Nothing more was said until they arrived at home.

Danger! The thought had never come to him before. Had there been a dread in Annie's heart? Was he in her eyes as one already beginning to drift away upon a treacherous sea, the shores of which were wreck-strewn, and the bottom crowded with the heart's richest treasures, forever lost?

"Such transformations are taking place every day!" Why had she said this? He could not thrust the question out of his mind.

The warm, well-furnished chamber to which they retired on reaching home had in it two beds, and a crib drawn up to the side of one of them. In this crib lay a baby, with the rosy tinge of health on its soft round cheeks; and on the low, narrow bed slept a little girl, over whose blue eyes the white lids, with their fringe of lashes, were drawn as a curtain.

Mrs. Donaldson had scarcely time to remove her outer garments ere the baby awoke. She caught it up from the crib, and held it with such an unwonted and passionate embrace to her bosom, that her husband looked at her in surprise; this surprise was increased when he saw tears falling over her face, and her frame begin to quiver with the sobs she was vainly trying to repress.

He did not say anything to her now. What could he say? remembering as he did the tone in which she had uttered the sentence: "Such transformations are taking place every day;" and perceiving by an unmistakable intuition the fear out of which this utterance had sprung? He was neither angry nor annoyed, as men are apt to be under the first intimation from their wives that they are in danger of becoming intemperate. The sad events of the night, which had moved him so deeply, and the sudden impression which had come upon him that he was in danger, were both too strong to admit of any such feelings.

A silence fell between them after this; a silence that lay like a heavy nightmare on the heart of Mrs. Donaldson, whose eyes did not close in sleep until the excessive weariness that comes to the long wakeful, at day-dawn set its hush and oblivion upon her.

Nor was this silence broken, except in a constrained and unsatisfactory way, as they sat together with their children at breakfast on the next morning. Mr. Donaldson had almost forgotten to kiss his wife in their daily partings; but the kiss was given now, as he was leaving for business; and his Annie would have seen, but for the tears that were dimming her vision, an unwonted tenderness in her husband's serious eyes. It had rarely happened, in many months, that Mr. Donaldson failed on his way to businrss in the morning to stop for a glass of ale; or, if he did not feel just right about the stomach—a thing too frequently occurring of late—for something that would tone him up a little more sharply. But on this particular morning, he turned neither to the right nor to the left on his way, and reached the store without the taint of liquor on his breath.

After arranging some busines matters that required his early attention, he went to the miserable abode of the Lawsons to do for them what was needed in their sad extremity. He had feared that Lawson would go out before his arrival there, but he found him at home, and in his right mind; but broken down and wretched in the extreme. The stern announcement of his child's death, coming upon him so suddenly, while in the midst of his boon-companions, had sobered him on the instant, and left him in a condition to take in the full meaning of what awaited him on his arrival at home; and to feel to the utmost his criminal responsibility. And when Mr. Donaldson said to him, as they stood by the dead baby, looking down upon its wasted, but now white and placid face:

"This should not have been, Lawson."

"I know it," he replied, while the tears fell in great drops. "But there is no help for it now. God has taken her."

"There is help for the future," said his friend. "Help for those who are left; and it is in your hands. Shall not this suffice!" And he laid his fingers softly on the forehead of the dead child.

"It shall! I have promised Katy, and I have promised God that it shall! Poor Katy! Poor Katy! When I looked at your wife last night, and then at Katy, and remembered when they were young girls together, and how beautiful and bright and happy Katy was then, it cut me so to the heart that it seemed as if it would kill me. What a wretch I have been! But you don't know anything about this craving for drink when it once gets hold of a man, and God grant that you never may! It comes on so gradually that you do not suspect anything, until all at once you find yourself in its power, and you will be too feeble to resist. Take my advice, and neither touch nor taste what at first allures so pleasantly, but at last stings like a serpent, and bites like an adder. No man is safe who indulges his appetite. You, or any one else who does so, may become in a few years what I am today!"

Donaldson felt a chill run down to his heart. Be what this man was! His sweet baby dead! His true, pure, and loving wife in the frightful extremity of Katy Lawson. It seemed for a few moments as if demon hands were on him, and as if he were being dragged to hopeless perdition.

"God forbid!" fell audibly from his lips.

"God forbid!" repeated Lawson. "But He cannot forbid," he added solemnly, "if one touches the accursed thing. If a man take up fire, will it not burn him? If he draw a viper into his bosom, will it not sting him?"

For a little while Donaldson stood in stern debate. Appetite, stronger, more subtle, and more tenacious in its hold upon him than he had for an instant imagined, pleaded for delay, and set itself in the forefront of resolution. "Not yet! Not yet!" it cried. "Don't be rash! Don't give way to weak fears! Don't bind yourself with oaths and pledges that will rob you of freedom! You are not a slave, but a man, and can use or abstain at will."

He had lifted his eyes from the face of the child; but again they fell upon it, and it seemed as if he were looking at his own dead baby.

"Never again, so help me God!" fell half audibly from his lips, and the momentous debate was over.

When Mr. Donaldson met his wife at dinner-time she saw a new expression in his face. His eyes were brighter and seemed to have grown larger; his skin had a clearer tone; his mouth was set more firmly. He kissed her—how rare the kiss of late!—and his breath was pure and wholesome. She could not keep the tears back for the glad surprise that was in her heart; and to hide them she laid her face down upon his shoulder. Neither spoke for a long time, for both were too deeply moved to trust their voices. When at last, Mrs. Donaldson lifted her face, and looked into that of her husband, it was so full of a new light and beauty that it seemed as if set in rays of sunshine.

"I saw Mr. Lawson to-day, after you were there," she said, "and I think he is in real earnest about reforming his life. But what hope is there, unless some one takes him by the hand?"

"I will take him by the hand," replied her husband. "I have thought it all over. As soon as that poor little baby is laid away, I am going to make a place for him at the store, and do my utmost to set him fairly on his feet again, and keep him there if it be possible through precept, example, and watchfulness to do so."

"Example." His voice just lingered on the word, but the emphasis was strong enough to strike upon the ear of his wife and send a thrill of happiness to her heart.

"May God bless you and keep you!" was all she said, as she hid her face on his bosom. Though her eyes were full of tears, hope and joy were in her heart; for had not her husband stepped back from the brink of danger on which she had seen him standing so long?

(To be continued.)

FACETIÆ

"You are accused of being a chronic thief. What excuse have you got?" "None, 'cept in "chronic poverty" replied the vagrant.

A gentleman asked an American the other day what he thought of the English climate. He laughed and said, "Why, you haven't got a climate; you've only got samples."

Lord Chesterfield noticing a very grave and awkward couple dancing a minuet, said they looked as if they were doing it for money, and were doubtful about getting paid.

A successor of Benjamin Franklin gives us this: The idea of teaching every girl to thump a piano and every boy to be a book-keeper will make potatoes $5 a bushel in twenty years.

Two well-dressed young ladies were examining a statute of Andromeda, labelled, "Executed in terra cotta." Says one; "Where is that?" "I am sure I don't know," replied the other. "but I pity the poor girl, whatever it was."

'They tell me Mr. Brown has a great ear for music," said Fenderson. 'Yes' replied Fogg, 'I knew he had a great ear—two of them, in fact; but I did not know that they were for music. I supposed they were for brushing flies off the top of his head.'

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*Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound ranks first as a curative agent in all complaints peculiar to woman.

A gray horse used by the St. Louis Transfer Company in one of its teams is an habitual tobacco chewer.

The "Favorite Prescription" of Dr. Pierce cures "female weakness" and kindred affections. By druggists.

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Actual returns from the several theatres of this city show that about four millions of dollars were taken in by them during the season now closed. One of them, with its traveling companions in the provinces and one house in the city, received $800,000! The whole country gives $5,000,000 to foreign mission work among the heathen. One city gives $4,000,000 for amusements.—*New York Observer.*

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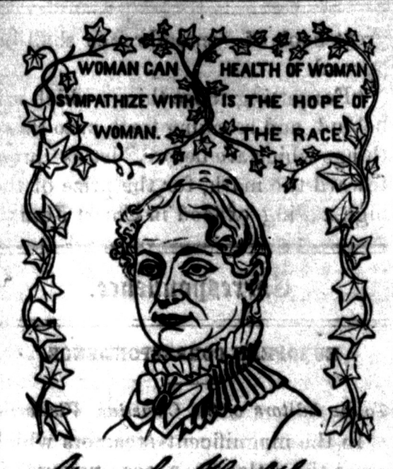

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