



## NEW YEAR'S EVE.

BY NORA CHESSON, Author of "Ballads in Prose," "Under Quicken Boughs," "Songs of the Morning," etc.

EVERYTHING comes to her who knows how to wait, and from the patient inquirer who seeks to lift the curtain of the future upon New Year's Eve, there shall surely be but few things hidden.

Does she want to know the exact appearance of the man she is to marry? Let her eat a hard-boiled egg, whose yolk has been extracted and replaced by salt, and go to bed (not fasting but thirsting), and she will dream of someone who brings her water to drink. The face she sees in her dream will be the face of her future husband! Such a spell needs some courage and endurance in the worker of it, as does the following one; but old wives will tell you that, like Somebody's patent pills, "they have never been known to fail." This is an omen that has nothing to do with marriage, but only with good fortune to come. Whosoever desires this must put under her pillow for nine nights running—beginning with New Year's Eve—a dead ember and a piece of coal that the fire has never touched. Having done this, she may be sure of good luck for a year to come, and also of the ill-will of her bed-maker and laundress!

It is said that the house-mother should rake her fire out carefully on New Year's Eve, and spread out the ashes smoothly on the kitchen floor. Next morning, when she rises, she may (or may not) find a footmark in the ashes. Turned towards the door the footmark bodes that one of the family will die early in the year; but if the print is turned as if entering the room, there will shortly be a birth. Who eats herrings on New Year's Eve will be prosperous all the year; and who chances to receive money on New Year's morning will be in luck's way as long. Those who have a dark man for their firstfoot may rejoice; and so may those who see a man first from their windows on New Year's morning. Floors must not be swept until the sun has shone on this day, lest the luck of the house be swept out with the dust. This is an Oriental as well as an Occidental superstition, and one may find it in Japan and Anglesey.

All water becomes wine between eleven and twelve on New Year's Eve, but no one must be so curious as to go out to stream or well at this time, or, like Peeping Tom, he will be blinded for his indiscretion. On this night, too, as on Christmas Eve, the cattle are supposed to receive the gift of human speech for an hour, and the bees hum midnight Mass in their hives! Mummers and masquers choose the New Year for their especial season; and New Year carols were once as popular and as pretty as those sacred to Christmas.

Men and women with blackened faces, much be-ribboned and carrying brooms, go about from house to house on New Year's Eve offering to sweep out the Old Year, and are paid in kind with eggs and butter, and New Year cakes baked in the shape of a crescent. The master of a house, before he bolts and bars the front door for the last time in the old year, will lay down in the doorway the largest silver or the smallest gold coin in his possession. If it remains in the doorway untouched until the New Year is rung in, and the door is re-opened, the house will not want money all the year.

It is very lucky to be paid money on New Year's morning (Northamptonshire), and luckier to give away food (Ireland), but industry is misplaced at this season, and those who want

good fortune to come their way must not bake or brew to-day, must not wash clothes, mend clothes or make clothes. Wheels must not turn at all during the twelve nights of Christmas, and the knitting-needles may rust if they will (Saxony), for—

"Who knits, with sorrow sits;  
Who spins, adds three to her sins;  
Who weaves, the Virgin grieves;  
Who nets, God forgets;  
Who fishes, against heaven wishes."

A dream dreamed on New Year's Eve is sure to come true; but a New Year's Morning dream comes through the Gates of Ivory instead of the Gates of Horn, and is not to be believed in.

A New Year's Day child will be always lucky, if a boy; if a girl, she will have no luck but much beauty, according to a Hungarian superstition, and men's hearts will be poured out like water before her.

The Wassail Bowl is as much a New Year as a Christmas custom. Here is a Gloucestershire Wassailing song.

"Wassail, Wassail, all over the town,  
Our toast it is white and our ale is brown;  
Our bowl is made of a maple tree;  
We be good fellows all; I drink to thee.  
Be here any maids? I suppose here be some;  
Sure they will not let young men stand on the cold stone.  
Sing hey, O maids, come troll back the pin,  
And the fairest maid in the house let us all in."

Country folk used to observe the quarter whence the wind blew on New Year's Eve with much attention. "As it is calm or boisterous; as the wind blows from the south or north; from the east or the west; they prognosticate the nature of the weather till the end of the (coming) year. The wind of the south will be productive of heat and fertility; the wind of the west of milk and fish; the wind from the north of cold and storm; the wind from the east of fruit on the trees." (Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland). When the New Year fell on a Sunday, "a pleasant spring and a rainy harvest were promised by the calendars, also many wars"; on a Monday, "little fruit and the death of great men"; on Tuesday, "a bad harvest and much rain in spring and summer"; on Wednesday, "many wars" but "a good harvest"; on Thursday, "many winds and floods, but much fruit"; on Friday, "earthquakes and much free giving of money"; on Saturday, "hot summer, late harvest, much fruit, and rumours of wars."

Truly these superstitious customs are amusing reading, but every true reader of this magazine will, we feel sure, rather respond, in their hearts, to the sentiment of the following lines—

"Father, let me dedicate  
All this year to Thee,  
In whatever worldly state  
Thou wilt have me be;  
Not from sorrow, pain or care  
Freedom dare I claim,  
This alone shall be my prayer  
Glorify Thy Name."