

## A New Year's Surprise

By H. LUCIUS COOK



Little group, who cherished its traditions, and unless you were a "barnie," you could hardly hope to cross the Bromley threshold. The maid had just announced Mr. Smith, and a silence had fallen over the room, because, though Mr. Smith was only an instructor on the faculty, he was author of two books which were quite the vogue in the university town, and even the older members of the set were a little in awe of him. In talking over the evening afterwards, the gossips who thought they were observing, indicated that Mrs. Bromley had moved toward the door in special honor of this guest? They were positive, because her Andrews was so warm and maternal. But a few who knew who thought they knew, insisted she was more surprised than him, and that she showed it in a little tremble of her hand.

He that as it may, the Mr. Smith who entered was not the Mr. Smith they knew, but a stranger they had never seen before. Hence the consternation. Nor did Mrs. Bromley try to end the astonishment. In introductory remarks, she merely said: "I want



Not the Mr. Smith They Knew, but a Stranger.

to meet Mr. Smith," and did not volunteer a single explanation as to her credentials.

It was to be assumed that there was a mix-up, somehow, as the real Mr. Smith did not come, but at the evening were away, the consternation of the little group gradually gave place in spite of itself to admiration of the new Mr. Smith. To be sure, they looked at him with some skepticism, but they could see, but that was much, such a handsome fellow! Even the men could hardly take their eyes from him, and such a sense of humor! And then, indeed, "If he was not a new professor in the school, he ought to be. Yes, surely, he belonged."

At midnight Katherine and Mr. Smith were dancing a "moonlight waltz." "How wonderful he dances," was her thought, "and how I love him." But though they were so close together she could feel the beating of his heart, no word was said between them. They merely absented their bodies to the rhythm of the dance until the lights went on.

When the party broke up, Mr. Smith asked Mrs. Bromley if there was someone he might see home. "My niece, Katherine," she replied, "if you will be so kind." Had the gossips been near just then, they might have noted a slight tremor in the hostess' voice.

For several blocks the handsome pair walked arm in arm in deep silence. "Then he drew her suddenly and firmly closer and demanded in silvery tones that sounded like New Year's bells on a frosty night: "Tell me, Miss Katherine, if you please, how all this happened. I know you know. But to me it is a mystery, for I know that I was not wanted or expected."

She smiled and remained silent for a moment, but his strong arm flung with hers and gave her the assurance which she lacked, and she responded to the frankness of his healthy curiosity with the ardor of true love.

"You were wanted," she whispered. "And you were expected, too—at least by me. But you are right in assuming there was a mistake."

Here she paused and trembled a little before going on. "It was this before going on. It was this before to help myself through college. When auntie called the C. and asked me for Mr. Smith, I unthinkingly connected her with you. Instead of the president's office when his new secretary arrived, and his name and face were in my mind from that time on. It was all my fault, because I know which Smith my aunt wanted. But I didn't mean to; really I didn't. And the minute I heard her invite you, was the first I realized what I had done. It was too late then to rectify the mistake. Besides—"

"Besides," he added, kissing her. "You wanted me to come. And I am glad you did, for I have never been so happy in my life. 'Twill be a happy New Year for us both."

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## The Rainy-Day Girl

By MARTHA M. WILLIAMS

HEAVY, sharply-slanted rain made street-crossing perilous, but Ann plucked straight through it, steadying herself against the wind with the tip of a tilted umbrella. Midway the crossing she heard brakes grind, a wild shout—then in a wink she was snatched to one side by a strong arm, as a deep voice said roughly: "Can't you see an inch from your nose?"

"Can you? In this rain?" she flung back, trying to free herself. "No, you don't," cried her captor, lifting her bodily into the car from which he had sprung. "I'm going to take you wherever you may be going."

"Flattush, Brooklyn," Ann said, representing a glance. "But me out anywhere about the middle. Never mind street or number. I know my way after a fashion. Will you take me there?"

"Certainly!" from the party of the other part. "My name is—"

"Durrett," cried Ann. Three months later upon a brisk, smoky winter morning Norton Eastere said to his man across the desk: "See, look's a fortune. It only it breaks right. Look at me, slither pretty he put a half-million clear profit on that, just do. The making of it I owe to a bit rain."

"Face in the case, if you please," Jenny Durrett, newcomer from western parts, demanded masterfully. Norton smiled reflectively, then returned leisurely his adventure in the rain, adding at the end: "You know I'm not a slouch at handling able-bodied probability—Brooklyn and all its ways got the cream of it, as I said before. So when I forgot speed laws—was held up, carried to court by a couple of highly virtuous traffic cops—and so missed an appointment, keeping which I told you next day would have set me back just a hundred thousand dollars. Then before I was done putting myself on the back for my divinity I walked Tim Walker, my best bookie, with all on the brain. He got half I saved, and in six weeks brought in a gusher. In three more we were promising enough to have the big fish nibbling at us, but our heads were too hard. So we jumped away, brought in another gusher—so there we were—and here I am. No miracle you see—easy as sin indeed. I have just one wish unfulfilled."

"I know—to find the rainy-day girl," Durrett said.

Norton shook his head. "I never want to see her again," he said. "But I would like to find out how I can reward her for being so providentially in my way. I recall her face as sharply as a blur."

There the matter rested for a full fortnight. Then Jenny, in the loneliness of his peevish family down Jersey way, told the odd tale of his friend's amazing luck—not briefly, but with all the frills of a raconteur born. In spite of his protests it was voted a noble rumormongering worthy to be a best seller—there was even skepticism as to the million. Yet that night as his married sister, Louise Holt, went home alone with her sleepy husband, she said: "I wonder how could the rainy-day girl have been Ann Ritchie? Sounds so like her I'm just bound to find out."

Thus you see Fate moves in a mysterious way. Still, a month's diplomacy was required to pull off a dinner party that included among its component parts Miss Ann Ritchie Norton Eastere, Esq., the amiable Jenny Durrett, and sundry other nice folk, along with, of course, the hospitable Holts. A fine hearty dinner, one duly honored by waiting till the coffee had been served before Jenny was called on to tell over his shoulder. Aladdin tale. Ann Ritchie sat silent, smiling softly most of the time—other times frowning the least little bit. As she went toward the living room, Norton managed somehow to walk right behind her. Then, sinking down by her he said: "Have you many friends in Brooklyn?"

"Why do you ask?" asked Miss Ann, not batting an eye.

"Because I love to hear your voice—when you are not angry."

"Old stuff," said Miss Ritchie promptly, half-smiling from him. He laid fire but gentle hold on her at once, running on: "Tell me—what took you to Brooklyn that very rainy day?"

"Why, your car," said Ann innocently.

He stared at her. "Do you mean to say you had not started there?"

She giggled softly, shaking her head as she answered: "Flattush was the farthest place I could think of just then that wouldn't have sounded suspicious."

"So it was my punishment. I owe it something," half-whispered.

Ann insisted, however, saying fiercely: "You don't mean to say that fairy story is true?"

"It is—and then some," said the jubilant Norton. "Lunch with me to-morrow down at the Lawyers' club. Afterwards my bankers shall convince you."

Maybe that was how he got in the way of convincing her. Certainly he married her before summer died.

### Give the Ladies Their Due

"My, what a pretty thesaurus bottle. Where did you get it?"

"Gorgeous costume."

"One you must have pretty near smoked yourself to death."

"Not a bit of it—it represents the combined efforts of my wife, the girls and my mother-in-law."

## New Years, 1926

By EDWARD RETICKER  
in CHICAGO AMERICAN

NEW YEARS. And so we close this book to the year that is now.

Not cast behind a look—

Shut it up and start again.

And know each day's account

Records the thickest moment

By which we grow as men.

Mind not the blots. The stain

Fades with the lesson learned

Our lives are ever above

Through sorrow, grief and pain.

Record the smiles, the Song

Of Life we know as Love

We are not puny, but men

And choose the ways we go.

New Years. Again must close the book

As time rolls by

By keep

My unashamed to look—

To look to I.

RISP, cold and

snowy, it conformed

admirably with pre-

scribed holiday

weather. The wind

which how to Helen

of the window was a

relief from the hot,

furnace-heated air

of the bedroom. Perhaps the evening's

excitement had been too great. She

wondered. At any rate it was certainly

late enough to go to sleep, but in-

stead she lived over the entire pro-

ceedings of the New Year's Eve party

which she had attended. The host of

the room was stilling. Helen felt she

would smother. She called, but the cry

was scarcely audible. The loud snoring

in the next

room informed

her that her

mother had not

heard the desper-

ate call.

After making

such an ado over

the New Year,

welcoming it so

heartily, so pro-

fessing, was this

such an ado over

to serve her? On

a second thought,

however, if she

had it some way,

she believed that

this method would

be no worse than

any other. Yet, how disgusting to

smother to death. Thus reasoning

after the hysteria, she relaxed, and as

she sank down into the pillow, she

continued to go down, down hundreds

of feet through endless space. With

clenched hands and set teeth she realized

that the expected ending had not

been as simple as she had anticipated.

Down, down; some water came late

sight. A bridge now came into view;

a huge span over enormous falls. It

was a rushing, tumbling torrent of

bulky-green, sparkling water. She

tried to hold herself back, to break the

fall. When Helen landed, to her sur-

prise, she found herself in a snow

bank instead of water. She beheld

huge snow banks and little snow banks

everywhere. Looking to her right she

saw the old grammar school she had

attended when a little girl. Forgetting

her twenty-four years accumulated

since that time, Helen began climbing

up one mound, down and up another.

How wonderful the snow was! How

soft, how firm, but what fun.

Coming between the main school building

and the wing, she came to the slide

down the school hill. Looking

down, she noticed she had skis on,

just like olden times. To her delight

she was skimming through the air like

a bird. As she went the hill rolled up

before her like so much dough under

the weight of the rolling pin. Around

turns and down, every minute gaining

more speed, until she wondered—

at this accelerated

force would

avenge itself.

"Helen, Helen,

happy New Year!"

Helen looked

around in her

hazy twilight. Some-

one was calling

very softly, but

she could not see

the person. Again

and again came

the call. It was

a haunting sound

more like an echo

yet of a very fa-

miliar voice. Hel-

en waved as she

said to herself, "I

can't find you, but

I can at least be courteous." She was

confronted on abrupt curb. "Perhaps if

I sit down and slide that will slow me

down some." She found she could not

get down the great fast enough.

Again she heard the call, now some-

what louder. She was sitting up, rub-

bing her eyes. "I can sit up, mother. My legs will work now, and my arms."

Her mother looked at her curiously. "Is this the way the New Year affects you? First you wave your hand frantically, then you mumble some meaningless words. Just what does it all mean?"

Helen laughed. "It wasn't an ending at all, was it? It was a beginning. The beginning of a fine new year."

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## Happy New Year

Modern Swindler Is Master of Deception

Oscar Wells, president of the American Bankers' association, said at a dinner during the Atlantic City convention:

"Some of the stock swindlers we bankers track down are so plausible that the victims, even after their money is gone, aren't quite sure whether they've been swindled or not."

"It's like the boy who went to the grocer's to buy a quart of molasses."

"The grocer filled a quart measure with molasses and poured it into the boy's jug, but when he stopped pouring the boy said:

"Hold on there, mister. You haven't got all the molasses out of that measure. There's two inches stuck to the bottom."

"Oh, that's all right, son," said the grocer. "There was two inches stuck to the bottom of the measure before, you see."

"Yes, I see. Excuse me," said the boy, and he started for home."

### A Universal Vice

Admiral William R. Shoemaker was talking in Washington about the harm that has been done to American prestige abroad by attacks on the air service.

"And all, or practically all these attacks," he said, "are based on what? Gossip! Ignorant gossip!"

Admiral Shoemaker struck the table with his fist.

"When I think of the harm this sort of thing does," he said, "I come to the conclusion that half the world retails gossip and the other half wholesales it."

### New Use for Electricity

There is no longer any need to crawl under the house with paper and kindling wood to thaw out the frozen water pipes, and risk burning the house down or suffocating. A German electrician suggests a means of thawing them out with electricity. The ordinary house current is reduced to a voltage that is not excessive, by means of a transformer; and then it is sent through the frozen section of water pipe. The heat produced by the current will melt the ice.

### Diabetes in Children

According to the results of observations made by Boston specialists, children suffering from diabetes gain in weight if they are treated with insulin in the same manner as do normal children, says the Journal of the American Medical Association. The increase in height of the diabetic child treated with insulin, though occasionally normal, is usually below that of the normal child.

### Popular Despite Cost

Every baby costs \$8 a month extra the first two years, a statistician of Germany has figured, and that doesn't include the charges of doctor and nurse, says Capper's Weekly. However, that isn't near as much as a motor car costs, and every young mother and young daddy knows, babies are the greatest little inventions the world has ever seen.

### Careful Feeders

Natives of India will not eat canned fish from the western world, because good Hindus do not eat food prepared by any one but the women of their household or servants of their own caste. They fear it may be polluted by contact with persons below their caste, or adulterated with ingredients forbidden by their religion.

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