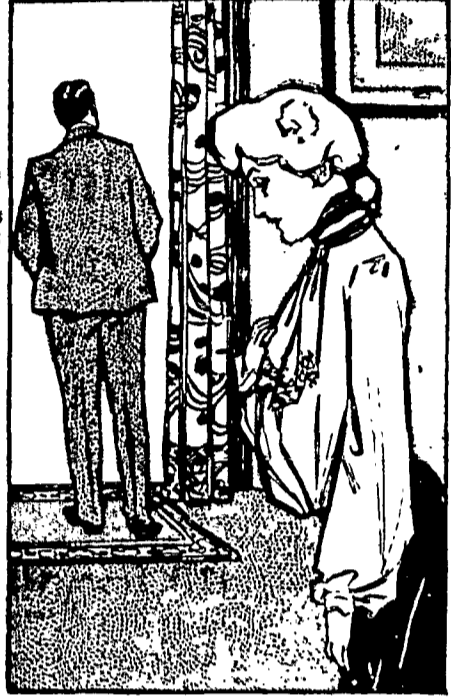


# A NEW YEAR'S GIFT

By  
**Richard T. Capron**

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**J**OHN, I have something to say to you."  
"What is it, Ethel?"  
"Why, it's—I can't."  
"Come, brace up, little girl and out with it."  
"Well, you know mother is very poor. The doctor says she won't last beyond the close of the year, and you mustn't cross her in anything. She's set her heart on it's an awful thing for me to say, but I must. You are a great favorite with her, and for a long while she's had an idea that when she died she'd leave me."  
"Yes, yes. Go on."  
"In your keeping."  
Having got it out, she hurried on to hide her confusion.  
"Now, it has occurred to me that it wouldn't be wrong for us to deceive



HE TURNED AND LEFT HER

her. It's necessary sometimes to deceive invalids for their own comfort or benefit. We might pretend, you know, that it's all made up between us. You don't misunderstand me, do you?"  
"Certainly not, Ethel."  
"It'll be such a comfort to mother, and you won't have to keep it up very long."  
"You mean we won't have to keep it up very long?"  
"Well, yes; it won't be so much trouble for me, you know."  
"Why not?"  
"I won't have to keep paying you little attentions and making you little presents."  
"Oh, I see. I'm to do all that."  
"You needn't make a burden of it, and you don't have to keep it up except when we are with mother."  
"Dear old lady! I'd do almost anything for her. You may count on me, Ethel. When shall we begin—now?"  
"Certainly not. There's no necessity. We'll begin the next time we're with mother."  
During that next time the invalid noticed a marked tenderness on the part of John Rathbone and an embarrassed expression on the face of Ethel. As soon as the mother and daughter were alone there were questionings that added to the girl's embarrassment, to which unsatisfactory answers were given, and she seemed rather unhappy than happy, but her mother knew that love was something of a malady and believed that matters had come round as she desired. She had little or nothing to leave Ethel when she died, and this fact had been keeping her in a gloomy condition, adding to her ailments. From the moment she made up her mind that Ethel would pass under the care of John Rathbone and be supported by his ample income she ceased to worry and consequently got better.

"John," said Ethel one day, "next week comes the 1st of January. Mother instead of passing away from us by that time, as the doctor feared she would, has quite recovered. Now, this deception has been very hard on me, and for some time I've been summoning my resolution to make a confession. The beginning of the new year is an especial season for making fresh starts, you know, and I've been thinking that we might tell mother the true state of affairs on New Year's day."  
"You're right, Ethel. I don't like deception myself even if for a good purpose. New Year's day would be a very appropriate time to make the confession, and I can lighten the blow somewhat by making you a present to show that anyway I think a great deal of you."  
"Only don't let it be an expensive one. Rather show your kindly feelings for me by your manner."  
"Leave that to me. I know how to get. Haven't I done very well through the trying ordeal?"  
"Yes; you've deceived mother, and that's all that was required."  
"On New Year's day I shall have another confession to make, to you as well as to your dear mother."  
The girl paled. "You're engaged?"  
"No."  
"But expect to be."  
"Rather, I hope to be."  
"Who is the girl?"  
"This won't do. I'm to make this confession on the 1st of January. I don't care to make it prematurely."  
And he turned and left her.  
Ethel strove to conceal from her mother the blow she had received at this announcement till the first day of the year, but it was impossible. The

mother saw that she was distressed and inferred that there had been a break between those she had supposed to be lovers. At last Ethel concluded to leave her with this supposition, believing that it would lighten her disappointment at the dreaded confession.  
New Year's day opened bright and beautiful, with the mercury climbing among the small figures. At 11 o'clock in the morning John Rathbone called Ethel before taking him to her mother's room led him into the library.  
"John," she said, "I don't think it necessary for you to double mother's disappointment by telling her of this engagement of yours."  
"I'm not engaged."  
"Well, this affair, whatever it is. Let us make our confession today, and you can tell her of your happiness later. Besides, I fancy she is not so certain as she was that it is settled between you and me. Still, I see no necessity for forcing too much upon her at once."  
"It is very thoughtful of you, Ethel, but I want to have it all over at once."  
"As you will. Perhaps I'd better make our confession."  
"I should think it would come with a better grace from me."  
"Why so?"  
"You will be embarrassed in stating as your motive honesty will lead you to state that the proposal to deceive came from you. You will stumble over this point and make a botch of the whole thing."  
"Very well. Do it yourself. Have you got the present you spoke of to prove your?" Her voice quivered, and she stopped.  
"Yes."  
"I hope it is nothing of value. But after all that doesn't matter. I can return it to you later."  
"You will always have that privilege."

Ethel led the way to her mother's room. The old lady was seated before a blazing wood fire, the flames of which danced and glistened on a pair of old-fashioned brass andirons. John took one of her hands and Ethel the other. Then they both kissed her, wishing her "a happy New Year." After a few remarks appropriate to the day John began the confession.  
"Mother, dear," it was the first time he had thus addressed her. "Ethel and I have done very wrong. We are going to confess on this first day of the new year and resolve to do wrong no more. We have been leading you to think that we are engaged. We are not. It was all done to help you to get well. I have another confession to make for myself alone. I am very much in love with Ethel and ask your permission to pay my addresses to her."  
The old lady looked bewildered, and Ethel's face dropped on to the arm of her mother's chair. Then a reply came to John's request.  
"You have my consent."  
"Ethel, you hear what your mother says. Will you be my wife?"  
Ethel without raising her head stretched her hand across her mother to John.  
"And here," he continued, "is a New Year's gift I have brought as evidence of my kindly feelings for you."  
He slipped a solitary diamond ring on her finger. There were a few mo-

ments of silence; then John went around to Ethel, lifted her head and kissed her.  
"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," she said, smiling through tears.  
"And so I am, doubly ashamed of myself. Ever since Mother Eve practiced her first deception we men have accused women of being arch deceivers. Here is a case in which a man has shared a woman's guilt. Mine has been a double shame. You have deceived only your mother. I have deceived you both."  
"Economy for the New Year."  
"My dear," said Mrs. Huggins as she laid down the paper and looked at her better half, "if you are willing to make a determined effort to economize during the coming year I promise to aid you all I possibly can."  
"What are you willing to do?" he asked.  
"Well, I won't pay over \$30 for any of my hats, and if the weather will only help me I'll make five last me through winter, spring, summer and fall."

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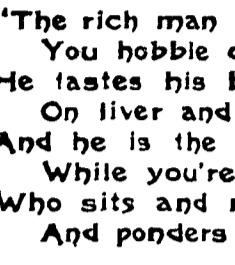
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# DEUCE OR ACE?

BEING THE CARRIER'S ADDRESS FOR 1904.  
BY  
**JOE LINCOLN**  
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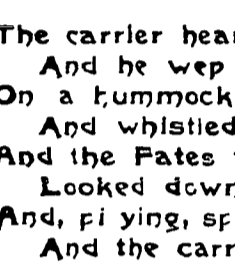
**CARRIER** sat by the sounding sea,  
By the sad sea waves he sat,  
And he wached the skip of the frisky flea  
And the sloop of the nimble goal,  
And the breakers chanted in chorus there,  
With never a pause or truce,  
A sorrowful song that seemed to bear  
A burden of "What's the use?"



"The rich man rides in his auto fine,  
You hobble on shank's mare;  
He fastes his banquet and sips his wine,  
On liver and tea you fare;  
And he is the real high ace of trumps,  
While you're but a lowly deuce  
Who sits and mopes in the doleful dumps  
And ponders on 'What's the use?'"



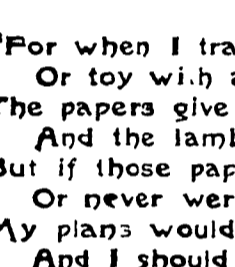
"What is the use of toiling hard,  
Of tramping a daily beat,  
A round that ends in the same front yard  
In the same old dusty street?  
Of carrying papers day by day,  
With never a chance ahead?  
Oh, he would surely be just as gay  
If carriers all were dead!"



The carrier heard what the breakers said,  
And he wept by the lonely shore,  
On a humpcock of sand he laid his head  
And whistled a weary spore;  
And the Fates that rule o'er the lives of men  
Looked down from their high's supreme,  
And, pitying, spoke to his fancy den,  
And the carrier dreamed a dream.



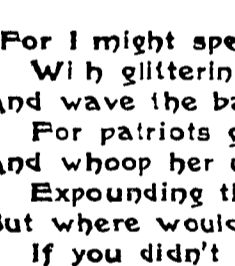
He dreamed that a mighty financier  
Came close to his seaweed bed  
And, soaring, spoke in his drowsy ear,  
And these were the words he said:  
"Oh, I can manage a syndicate  
And pilot a merger through,  
But who would know of my a'ent great  
If 'twasn't for men like you?"



"For when I travel the foaming brine  
Or toy with a Wall street deal,  
The papers give me the crimson line  
And the lamplings read and squeal;  
But if those papers were never read  
Or never were carried out,  
My plans would fall in a moment dead  
And I should go up the spout."



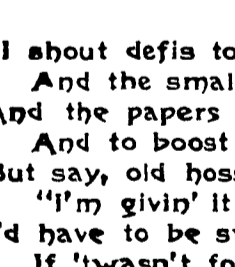
And next there stood by the carrier's side  
A man with a leader's charm,  
A statesman great who could "point with pride"  
And "view with a keen alarm";  
And he whispered softly behind his hand,  
And his words were terse and few,  
"Old boy," he said, "I may rule the land,  
But I owe it all to you."



"For I might speak to the public dear,  
With glittering phrase galors,  
And wave the banner and drop the tear  
For patriots gone before,  
And whoop her up till I split my throat  
Expounding the people's views;  
But where would I be on the final vote  
If you didn't spread the news?"



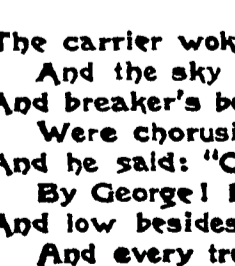
Then up there sauntered a pugilist,  
A knight of the "punch" and "jab,"  
With a giant frame and a nimble fist  
And a wondrous "gift of gab,"  
"Oh, I can settle the hash," said he,  
"Of anything drawin' breath!  
The blokes what hunts for a scrap with me  
Must fight or be talked to death."



I about defis to the human race,  
And the small boy loves my name,  
And the papers hustle to print my face  
And to boost me up to fame,  
But say, old hoss," and he made a bow,  
"I'm givin' it straight and true,  
I'd have to be swingin' the pick right now  
If 'twasn't for men like you."



And then there followed a lengthy line  
Of persons of every trade—  
An actress pretty, a great divine,  
And a general, gay with braid;  
Authors and merchants and engineers,  
Coming to there confess  
The debt they owed through the changing years  
To the carriers and the press.



The carrier woke from his gorgeous dream,  
And the sky was clear and bright,  
And breaker's bellow and sea gull's scream  
Were chrousing, "You're all right!"  
And he said: "Oh, never a deuce am I  
By George! I'm game and jack,  
And low besides, and likewise high,  
And every trump in the pack!"



Oh, it doesn't pay to have doleful dumps,  
And ponder on "What's the use?"  
Perhaps you may be the ace of trumps  
And think you're a simple deuce.  
Don't sit and grumble by Life's sad seas,  
But cheerily plod your way,  
And think of the carrier's dream—and, please,  
Just think of HIM, too, today.

# SHE WANTED TO KNOW

By  
**Earle Hooker Eaton**

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**A**S the clock struck 12 and the bells began noisily proclaiming to the world that the new year had arrived a look of grim determination passed over the face of Katharyn Jones. She locked both doors leading from the room, carefully inspected the windows to see if they were securely fastened, and then she glided to the side of Reuben Kidder.



"Mr. Kidder—Reuben—oh, may I call you Reuben?" she said softly.  
"Why, certainly—if it will give you pleasure," the young man replied, dropping his eyes before her gaze.  
"Reuben—Reube—Rube—there is something I have long wished to say to you, she went on, "and the auspicious, psychological moment has just arrived

the Danes would remark, skudaar has arrived; as the Germans would observe, it is now schaltjahr; as the Swedes would say, it is skottar; as the Italians would declare, anno bisestile is with us, and, as the Portuguese would intimate, anno bisexto is here after long and weary years of absence. Do you hear, Reuben Kidder, it is schrick-jaer, lepe-zere, blaup-ar, skudaar, schaltjahr, skottar, anno bisestile, anno bisexto?"  
"Why, I—I didn't know it was as bad as all that," Reuben said sorrowfully. "Pretty rough on the alphabet, isn't it? Oh!" he added suddenly. "Why, of course, to be sure. Certainly! How stupid of me! You mean that it's leap year."  
"Ah!" she whispered softly. "How did you ever guess it? Do you know, Reuben, what happened on leap year?"  
"Sure!" he said promptly. "One day more in the year. Seems funny to have 366 days instead of 365, doesn't it? That reminds me of a story—"

"Reuben," she interrupted firmly, "something else happened—something more important. Now, tell me frankly. Do you think women should—should?"  
"No," he cried, glancing toward the two locked doors.  
"Do you think women should?" she repeated.  
"Not much!" he broke in. "Not in a hundred years! It is unwomanly. It is—"

His voice quavered, and he looked about him nervously, as if seeking some avenue of escape.  
"As I was about to remark, Reuben," she went on coldly, implacably, "do you think the women of this country should?"  
With a moan he ran across the room, fumbling at the doors with trembling fingers. Both were not only locked, but the keys were in her pocket. And who, who, he thought, could ever find a woman's pocket? He glanced with longing eyes toward the windows, but her tall, willowy, determined form was between them and him.  
Seizing him by one arm, Katharyn Jones led him back to his chair, into which he collapsed like a punctured tire.  
"Reuben Kidder," she cried, placing the keys to both doors in his nerveless fingers, "Reuben Kidder, do you think women should—should?"  
Wildly shrieking, "Skudaar, schaltjahr, blaup-ar, skottar, schrickjaer!" he bolted through one of the unbolted doors and trotted a two minute mile between Katharyn Jones and his own bachelor fireside without the aid of a single pacemaker or wind shield.

and now—It was a bright idea, and he and Mrs. Bouncer resolved to push the fun along. They even invited some friends to time their own visits to the hour when Santa should call.  
The secret was well kept on both sides. For even disgruntled Willie didn't squeal. The boys set four chairs, only four, in a circle near the register for the confab of Santa with the three "big" Bouncer boys and were on tenter hooks all the afternoon waiting for the royal visitor. It was late twilight and the parlor comfortably filled with neighbors when Mr. Santa Claus was finally announced. Mrs. Bouncer received the card and handed

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