## OTHER ESSAYS FROM THE EASY CHAIR

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Other Essays from the Easy Chair by George William Curtis

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### **GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS**

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# EASY CHAIR

### GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS



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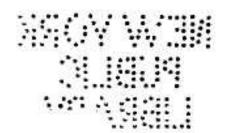
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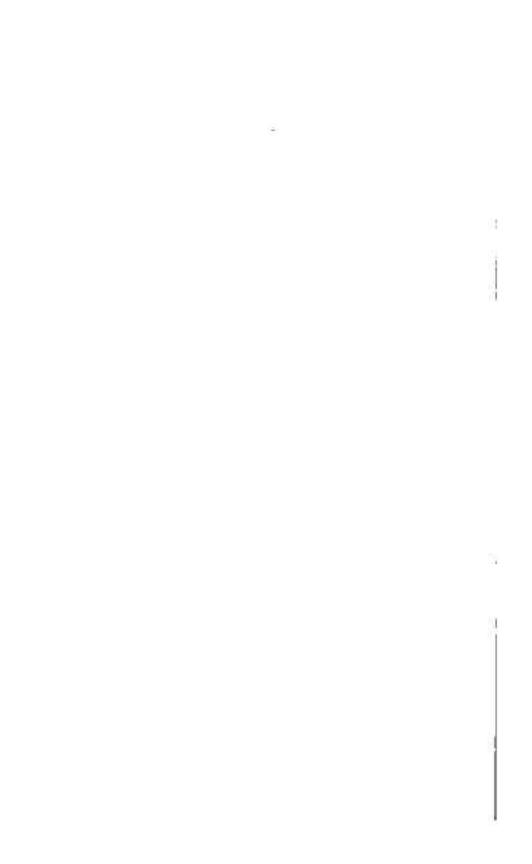
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#### THE NEW YEAR.

The eve of Saint Sylvesterabend

the eve of Saint Sylvester, the last night of the year—you shall wake and hear a chorus of voices sing-

ing hymns, like the English waits at Christmas or the Italian pifferari. In the deep silence, and to one awakening, the music has a penetrating and indefinable pathos, the pathos that Richter remarked in all music, and which our own Parsons has hinted delicately—

"Strange was the music that over me stole, For 'twas born of old sadness that lives in my soul."

There is something of the same feeling in the melody of college songs heard at a little distance on awakening in the night before Commencement. The songs are familiar, but they have an appealing melancholy unknown before. Their dying cadences murmur like a muffled peal heralding the visionary procession that is
passing out of the enchanted realm of
youth forever. So the voices of Sylvester's Eve chant the requiem of the year
that is dead. So much more of life, of
opportunity, of achievement, passed; so
much nearer age, decline, the mystery of
the end. The music swells in rich and
lingering strains. It is a moment of exaltation, of purification. The chords are
dying; the hymn is ending; it ends. The
voices are stilled. It is the benediction
of Saint Sylvester:

"She died and left to me . . .

The memory of what has been,
And nevermore will be."

But this is the midnight refrain—The King is dead! With the earliest ray of daylight the exulting strain begins—Live the King! The bells are ringing; the children are shouting; there are gifts and greetings, good wishes and gladness. "Happy New Year! happy New Year!" It is the day of hope and a fresh beginning. Old debts shall be forgiven; old