The Old Year and the New.

NEW-YEAR'S EVE. A long, unlighted hall, with a window at the farther end admitting a few stray moonbeams. Under a door here and there a crack of light from the rooms opening upon the hall. A vague feeling that over there in the darkness is a staircase, with a clock upon the landing, slowly, lazily ticking the year away. It is rather cold out here away from the family party. But presently the clock strikes midnight and the old year is no more. The new year bursts into life with a loud peal of song from the merry-makers. Then the doors open, the long, dreary hall is flooded with light and sound, and up over the creaking stairs troop the jubilant young folks to bed.

Last of all come two young and beautiful girls, with arm linked in arm. They are fast friends, and as they reach the landing where the tall clocks stands they lean upon the balustrade and listen to the tickling,—the lazy ticking of a century ago. They see not the figure of the young son of the house who stands above them in the upper entry leaning over the balustrade to listen to their talk.

"Do you know," says one dreamily, "there is an odd story connected with this old clock. It used to stand in the great hall of an old castle on the Rhine; and it is said that in those times, just when about to strike the first hour of the new year, the clock would stop, as if unwilling so soon to forget its old friend, and begin the record of a new age. There is something touching in the thought that the clock, become through so many days attached to its master, goes on in its duty to a new master till, in the very moment when it would record the first spent hour, it is overcome with grief and weariness and dies away into silence. Hear how thoughtful and sad the tickling is even now. How blank the silence must be when it has stopped, as if eternity had come to an end!"

"One must feel at such a moment," returned the other, as if depressed by thought, "that there will be an inevitable end to all this living, which seems so endless,—a definite goal to which we are drawing nearer with every stroke of the pendulum. Do you remember