

[Written expressly for the DESERET NEWS.]
ROSAMOND'S CHOICE.

A NEW YEAR'S STORY BY HOMESPUN.

Rosamond was standing with a crowd of girls at the corner of a school building, in Salt Lake City and laughing with the rest at the merry sallies of wit with which Jennie Rathbone answered her companions.

"Yes," said Jennie, "I am strong-minded beyond everything. I just think its heavenly to earn one's own living, and be literary and independent." "What about the husband when he comes along?" asked Cora Whipple.

"I shall be equal to him and the occasion," answered the saucy girl, "and when he does not keep step with my tune, I shall just make him pipe his own. But, girls, the teacher will come out to see what's going on if we don't disperse soon."

And away buzzed the crowd of light-hearted girls, leaving Rosamond Willis standing near the wall. She was just wondering if she could ever be strong-minded. She was a slender girl, with a peculiar face. Her skin was purely white, with a rather straight red mouth, that never pouted. Eyes of a very light blue; but the liquid brightness of the eye, and the large well-opened gaze redeemed them, and made them almost beautiful; almost I said, for the pale hue of the eyelash and eyebrow well-nigh spoiled the beauty of the whole face. A nose, straight, with thin, delicate nostrils, a well rounded forehead, over which parted the reddish-yellow hair with so-called grace, hanging in four lovely curls to her waist, and two tiny shell-like ears completed the fascinating face.

One could scarcely help wondering wherein the expression of Jennie Rathbone's face betokened strong-mindedness, or calm self-contained Rosamond could disclaim that noble but abused quality.

Jennie was large, and finely formed, but her face was full of weakness. A short undecided chin, with a lumpy nose and curving lips were not signals of strength. But Jennie was pretty and full of cute taking ways.

Little Cora was the vine that clung around her sturdy friend, Jennie's uncertain support. Rosamond silently pondered over her companion's words, turning to take her homeward way, when she almost ran into the arms of a young man who was coming around the corner at the same time.

"Mr. Stuart," breathlessly exclaimed the girl.

"Gracious!" ejaculated the youth, "the object of my search."

"If you'll be kind enough to stop staring at me as though I were a newly discovered Egyptian mummy, and stand out of the way, so that I may pass, I will be greatly obliged, Mr. Stuart," said the girl, without a particle of sarcasm in her tones, only extreme, cold frankness.

"Always cruel, Miss Rosamond," nervously answered the young man, "I was just seeking you to ascertain if you would take a little ride with me, this afternoon, in my father's buggy."

Dressed like a fashion plate, exquisitely neat, with the daintiest of linen, and newest rage in ties embracing his thin neck, his extremely long slender legs adorned with the most stylishly cut pants, and bright boots, stood this rich man's son, sheepishly fearing the cold replies this girl vouchsafed him. Evidently a dandy, his conscious vanity betrayed that.

"No, Mr. Stuart, I have got something else to do this afternoon of far more importance," calmly said the girl, "I must go home, good day."

Fred Stuart looked admiringly at her trim figure, as she walked away without the slightest touch of pride, or the least loss of her head. Only that calm self-contained manner that was better than pride, and more chilling than haughtiness. "Confound her," muttered the youth, "I'll make her like me; I have never known failure yet," drawing his collar up proudly and smoothing out his tie; "Fred, my boy, you must make that girl come to your feet."

Fred Stuart was the son of a wealthy banker, and what little brains he had, were devoted to the noble art of "flirting." His father intended him to follow in his own footsteps, and Fred most likely would make a very good money-maker, as he was close, and very careful with his allowance.

Fifteen years ago, society in Utah was freer, with less formality and more innocent pleasure than now. The young people who attended this school had become cemented together, and formed what was then called "a crowd." They often gathered at each other's houses and spent the evening in innocent games, sometimes even including "kissing games." One evening the crowd had gathered at Jennie's house, her mother being extremely sociable and fond of young society.

There was Robert Adams, a young man who lived in the country, and who was at present going to school in the city, Jennie and Cora, Rosamond Willis and her brother Harry, Fred Stuart and his brother Will, Lily Harrison, who lisped, the Brown girls, of whom there were three, Joe Ostler, and two or three of Jones' big boys.

A happy party they were! They sat around against the wall, chatting and laughing, at first; Jennie Rathbone and funny little Tilly Harrison sitting on two of the girls' laps as there were not chairs enough.

"Let's play gameths," said Tilly.

"Yes," cried Bob Adams, "let's play gameths."

"Oh, no, let's play cross questions

and crooked answers," said Rosamond, "I can't bear kissing games."

And so for a while they played at the puzzling game, but finally two or three spoke up for a forfeit game, and the simple little pastime of "button, button," was indulged in. And how mysteriously did Jennie whisper "hold fast all I give you," around the quiet circle, making feints of dropping it now and then into the clasped hands of the players, and then when she had gone clear around, how triumphantly she called out, "Button, button, who's got the button, Fred Stuart?"

"Tilly Harrison," knowing well she had not.

"No thir," opening her hands.

"Hand over your forfeit, give us your silver ring, Fred, you look lots better without it." And passing merrily around the room, she caught one and then the other, greedily gathering up handkerchiefs, pencils, ear-rings, rings and even a hair-pin from poor Cora who had taken off all her jewelry and despairingly offered that as her only remaining movable.

Then, they played "Simon says thumb's up," until it came to be Tilly's turn, when she so muddled everybody by lisping "Thimon thays thumbth up, Shimon thays thumbth down," that the players entered a unanimous protest, and abandoned the game.

The forfeits were filling up the baby's cradle, where Jennie had piled them for safe keeping; but Bob Adams pleaded for just a turn or two of "Ship's arrived," and so they tossed the handkerchief back, and forth with the noisy salutation of "Ship's arrived," and shouted with laughter, when some luckless wight sang out "Cobblers," when "k" was going the rounds. What a noisy, merry, thoughtless, innocent crowd they were!

Then at last came the hanging of the forfeits. Harry Willis was judge, and Jennie, strong-minded Jennie, held the hidden article over his bandaged eyes, "Heavy, heavy, hangs over your head."

"Fine or superfine?" asks Harry.

"Superfine; what shall the owner do to redeem it?" continues Jennie.

"She must go to Rome," and so on down the whole list. Laughing, jesting, challenging and arguing, the forfeits were redeemed at last.

During the post office forfeit, Bob Adams had called out for Rosamond to get a letter with two stamps. Rosamond hesitated a moment, then got up, walked quietly out and shut the door behind her, and Bob breathlessly asked her if he could see her home.

"Why Harry's here, but I guess he won't mind. Yes, I don't care."

"There's the letter, Rosamond."

She calmly turned her smooth, creamy cheek for him to kiss, saying, "One stamp's enough, Robert."

Ah, who can tell the fresh deep river of happiness that rolled over the boy's heart as he went into the room, shutting the door as he passed through, with the touch of that velvet cheek tingling on his lips, and the glorious prospect of walking home with Rosamond.

She, in her turn, called out her brother. When Fred's turn came he called out for a letter for Rosamond, with thirteen stamps on it.

"I don't want it," said Rosamond.

"Don't spoil the play, Rosie," said Jennie.

"Well I don't; and I won't go."

Jennie immediately declared that forfeit redeemed, wishing to avoid any discussion or ill feeling.

When the party broke up, at 10 o'clock, Bob stood outside eagerly watching for Rosamond's appearance. As she reached the door, Fred stepped up and said:

"Rosamond, may I have the pleasure of seeing you home?"

"No, thank you, Fred." Going out of the door without a word of explanation.

Some of the girls giggled a little, and Harry laughed as he said:

"That mitten wasn't very warm, was it, old boy?"

Jennie rather spitefully said she "despised stuck-up people."

Fred looked at her gratefully, but hurried out of the house to hide his discomfiture. He was just in time to see Rob and Rosamond turning the corner, as they walked slowly along.

"Impudence! What can she mean? Perhaps she only wants to show off, or make me like her better by holding off a little. I shan't give up, I can't that's all."

Thus musing, he strode homeward, with his hands grimly stuck in his overcoat pockets.

As for Robert and Rosamond, they strolled along under the dark-blue, star-embroidered curtain of heaven, and talked of various common-places, and Rosamond wondered dimly what peculiar emotion of pleasure stirred at her heart in this quiet evening walk.

Robert told her of his distant country home, and how his summers were spent in harvesting the ripened grain, and cutting down with the scythe the tender perfumed meadow grass, and how his parents were building a new home, after which he was to own the old log home, with its large, low, homely rooms, and the pretty apple orchard at the back.

"But I guess I am tiring you," said Rob at last, "talking about such stupid things. But you wanted to know something about where I lived, and I forgot that you might not care to hear so many details."

"No, I am not tired in the least. Are you happy at home? Do your folks keep cows and have a dairy?"

"Yes, we are very happy. Mother is one of the cheeriest, sweetest-tempered little women that ever lived."

"Then you take after your mother,

Robert. I have wondered whom you resembled most."

"Thanks, Rosie," and the young man colored high with pleasure at the compliment. "You wanted to know if we had a dairy. Yes, we have, although it is rather a homely one just now. Father is putting a large cellar under the new house, and I am to have the old spring house, which we now use for milk, when the folks move into the new home. But I don't know when I shall occupy the dear old cabin, for I daresay I will have to hunt a long while ere I find anyone willing to take charge of it for me."

"Nonsense, Robert, you will find a young, nice girl in your own town, when you leave school, who will know how to take care of you and your home, too; and press tubs of creamy cheese, and quantities of sweet butter. That's the kind of wife you will select, and you will be quite right, too."

The girl said this without a shade of personality in her tones, but as a mother would speak to her son. And Bob felt hurt and repulsed, he scarcely knew how. However, he commenced talking of the examination which was shortly to take place, and wondered if there would be a party; and when they parted, he simply raised his hat, and said "Good night."

Rosamond sat late that evening with her mother, telling her all that had happened; for they were more like sisters than mother and daughter.

"Mother, I tried again to show Fred Stuart how distasteful his attentions and nonsense are to me, but he won't take a hint. I shall certainly tell him frankly my opinion of him, if he asks me to show him another favor."

"You will do right I am sure, Rosamond. Only don't wound his feelings unnecessarily." "I shall tell him the simple truth, and it may do him good."

As Rosamond combed out her silken golden curls for the night, she wondered at the change in Rob's manner as he left her, concluding she must have said something unfortunate (as her friend told her she was always doing) which had offended him.

"It must have been the excitement that has given me such an odd feeling," she said to herself as she drew her shoes from her pretty little feet. "I should like to know the kind of girl Robert Adams will select for a wife," burying her head in the pillow for warmth, and in a few moments she was quite lost to Robert Adams' future wife and everything else, for the thin-delicately veined lids were over the blue eyes and Rosamond was asleep. Her last thought showed quite plainly that she hardly believed what she told Robert about the girl whom he would choose, for she was wondering and wondering what she would be like.

Oh youth! Thy happy unconsciousness is a brighter charm, and a stancher shield than all the arts of Circe.

The days flew on and Examination Day was close at hand. There was to be a party in the school-house that evening, and on the Sunday evening previous, several of the young people were at Sister Willis' talking over the affair.

Robert Adams, who played a little, was wading gallantly through "The Battle of Waterloo," rattling away at the retreat of the French, coming with the heavy bass of the cannonading, scampering over the keys at the flight of Bonaparte's forces, at which noisy point Fred Stuart took the occasion to ask Rosamond in his softest tones and with his sweetest smile if he could be her partner at the coming party, just as she commenced her reply the retreating army was merged into the lamentation of the slain, which Robert did with the softest pedals down, and her words came distinctly to his ears.

"No, Frederick, I don't wish to go with you. You are not the kind of a young man I can like. You drink occasionally (don't deny it, Harry has seen you in liquor), you smoke and swear. It is no use asking me to go with you, for I shall never do it. Tilly," turning to her, "what are you going to wear?"

A half-savage pleasure filled Robert's heart at the glorious snub that his rival had received. But the next moment, he thought, "no doubt she despises me quite as heartily for being rude and contrived. I would be a fool to risk such a refusal. I dare not carry out my intention of asking her to go with me. Never mind, Robert, there's as good fish in the sea as ever were caught."

Which philosophic reflection failed to comfort Robert at all, for though the sea might be filled to overflowing with fish just alike, the world only contained one Rosamond.

Examination day dawned clear and bright, and all the students (scholars they were called then) were on time and seated in their desks, as the teacher rang the bell to call attention for prayers.

Then followed class after class; the arithmetic class, in which Robert Adams specially distinguished himself; then the reading, in which Jennie Rathbone took the lead; the spelling class with its knock-downs of "Phthisic" and "rhinoceroses;" the grammar class, wherein Rosamond outpaced all the other parsers; and at last, the classes were over, and the paper came next. All settled themselves back for a treat; fathers and mothers proudly anticipating the triumphs in composition of their children, and the young people looking conscious and pleased, and when Jennie Rathbone walked grandly up to the platform, made her embarrassed bow, and rustled the manuscript paper bedecked with narrow red, white, and blue ribbon, bows and streamers, her reply did form drawn to its fullest extent, and the light of excitement shining through her features, there was a hushed pause of expectancy all over the room. Even the teacher settled back in his chair with a satisfied sigh, prepared to enjoy this reward of his labor and pains.

How nervously the title of "The College Advocate," was read, and the time honored motto of "Excellence is the reward of labor," after which Jennie plunged into her editorial, commencing: "My young friends and companions! Do we ever pause to consider," and winding up with, "let us ever strive to perform every duty and great will be our joy." Then there were essays following, with weak jokes, and a set of invalid verses, everybody knew to be Tilly Harrison's, who was the school poet, and a local column with the announcement of various fictitious marriages; and dotted in between jokes, such as: "If Tilly is not Harry's son (Harrison) she is Harry's girl," and so on, until the paper wound up with an elaborate essay on "The Workings of the Human Mind," by the teacher, and Jennie walked back to her seat with blooming cheeks, a bounding heart, and ribbons fluttering, as the whole audience burst into a round of applause that shook the building.

That evening Rosamond went to the party with her brother Harry and Tilly, who was his partner, and never had she looked lovelier. Her dress was a book-muslin, tucked in diminishing tucks to the waist, short enough for comfort and just long enough for modesty; a pretty infant waist, and full sleeves gathered in at the wrist, with mauve ribbons at her throat, and a dainty mauve sash around her waist hanging in long loops and ends half way down her skirt; her lovely red-gold hair in four heavy ringlets to her waist, and her clear white skin like the leaf of the calla lily; her blue eyes like shining stars; she was indeed a picture of loveliness.

Jennie looked very pretty in a blue merino dress that set simply to her arm, ruffled half way up the skirt, and blue ribbons in her hair.

Such fun and pleasure. The hours flew like winged things, and when the hour came to close, all declared they were not the least tired, they could dance till morning. However, they were not allowed to do so by their wise elders, and in an hour everything was silent and dark around the old school house.

As the Winter was nearly over, the boys began to drop out of school as their services were needed at home.

Robert Adams went to his distant home with a heavy heart. He bade Rosa a quiet good by, as the crowd were bidding each other good night after an evening spent at Tilly Harrison's.

She was equally quiet although her heart ached with a dull pain, at the thought of his departure. She suspected he liked her, for she was woman enough to detect his feelings from what he had said and done; but she could not speak a word, nor even ask why he had so changed of late. And so that happy winter was passed. Robert wrote occasionally to Harry, wishing to be remembered to Rosamond, but did not write to her.

Two years passed slowly on. During that time most of Rosamond's young companions were married and settled for life.

Fred Stuart had turned the citadel of Jennie Rathbone's stern heart, and carried the captive in chains to his home.

Poor girl! The chains were triple-plated but they would wear through, and show the base metal beneath. She had abandoned long ago all her redoubtable theories of strong-mindedness, and lived mostly to avoid giving offence to her keeper, who would on the slightest provocation clang her fetters before her eyes, and lay on her shuddering soul the lash of invective. And yet the world of gossip thought how fortunate Jennie was and how happy she must be when she drove through the streets in her buggy, clothed in velvet and furs.

Harry Willis and Tilly Harrison were married, and lived in a snug three roomed cottage, on the lower end of the same lot where Rosamond and her mother lived.

Cora Whipple was the third wife of a prosperous merchant, and clung as lovingly to her good husband as she had to poor Jennie.

On New Year's Day just two years after the opening of our story, Rosamond was down at Harry's letting their "yearling" as she called their fine baby boy, pull out her long satin curls, romping and laughing with him "to an ecstacy," as little prattler Tilly said, and talking about that big New Year's dinner they were to have, when Harry came through the lot, and told his sister that an old friend had called to see her, and was over at her house.

She hastily brushed her rumpled curls over her finger, wondering who it might be, and running home she went in by the front entrance and opened the parlor door.

Robert Adams was playing on the organ to amuse himself while waiting for her, and did not notice her.

She started back, and in a moment a spirit of love, happiness, doubt and trembling seemed to possess her.

She waited a moment to calm herself and then shutting the door noisily she greeted Bob as he rose from the stool with a friendly calm handshake.

But if she was calm, he was not; for he was a little startled, and every vestige of color faded from his brown cheek; and his brown eyes had a quazed but eloquent expression in their depths.

He mechanically shook her offered

hand, and then helplessly almost, from excess of emotion, sank down again to the stool.

She sat in the chair at the table, they carried on a desultory conversation about everything they could think of. At last, they spoke of old times, calling up incidents and memories of their winter in school.

"By-the-by, Robert, we have heard from you for a long while. I have been wondering if you have run across that nice girl who was a press cheese for you in the quaint homestead. Maybe that's what you have come up to the city for now, casting a demure but keen glance at him, to discover the effect of his words.

He sighed wearily as he answered, "No, Rosamond, I haven't found the girl whom I could care for at all."

Sly girl! Who knows what confidences of Robert to Harry had been betrayed to Rosamond's interested ears during the long two years! However, she looked superbly unconscious she listened to his words.

"There was a girl, went on the young man desperately, whom I almost wedded, and who yet lives in my—Rosamond," breaking down as the cadency of his words came upon him, "Don't let me make a fool of myself, and he swung around and commenced strutting on the organ to hide his emotion.

She walked quietly up to him, and laying her hand on his shoulder, leaned caressingly over his bowed head, her curls brushing his cheek and falling over his breast, thrilling him to his finger ends with their touch, softly whispered:

"Who was that girl, Bob? Do you mind telling me?"

"Rosamond! Rosamond! will you come to my arms, my darling?"

And she slid down to her knees, resting against his heart, she let him kiss her lips with fond earnestness and sighed in happy content as he caressed her pretty head and tangled his fingers in her long tresses.

Looking up presently, she said:

"See here, Robert; I can't make cheeses, but I know all about butter making."

"Better the cheeses! I don't like cheese, anyway."

"Yes," laughing softly, "but I ain't a bit of a nice girl from the country."

"You are a—," but his mouth was covered with a little hand, and Rosamond said: "No flattery, sir."

That New Year's Day was years ago, and Rosamond is living now in her husband's country home, happy with her increasing family. She is president of the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association of her little town, and manages her home and other duties like the noble woman she is. Sometimes she comes on a visit to her mother at Conference time, and then you may be sure there is a grand reunion. Her daughter Lily will soon be old enough to go to school in the city, when she will board with her grandmother. She is still a calm, quiet, self-contained woman, and says she is bringing up her boys to respect womankind, and treat them as equals and companions.

"But all women are not so deserving of respect," says her fond husband.

"Perhaps they are not strong-minded enough. Or, more likely, they have not such a noble man of God to lead them along the path of life as I have." And she glances up at her handsome husband in proud content.

They are to keep this New Year in their own home, on which occasion Rosamond's mother, Harry and Tilly, with their six children, will share the hospitality of Rosamond's country house. Wouldn't you like to peep in upon them for one moment?

Jennie Stuart will keep open house in her grand home in the city, and sigh as she smiles, with a weary longing for a home and its joys.

I don't think the spirits of love, peace, and domestic content will hesitate about which of these households they will visit this fresh, glad New Year!

Happy New Year! Happy New Year!

Z. C. M. I.

Zion's Co-operative Mercantile Institution is noticed in both hemispheres as an exceptionally solid and flourishing commercial enterprise. No house on the continent has a better business standing. It was organized in October 1868, and in spite of panics, depressions and various fluctuations in the world of trade has steadily progressed. The parent store in this city is situated on the East side of East Temple Street and occupies a building 318 feet long by 100 feet wide, consisting of 3 stories and a basement. It is stocked with general merchandise covering all varieties in general demand and sold at wholesale and retail at prices regulated by the principle of fair profit. The drug store, situated on the West side of the same street, is a two story building with basement. There are branch stores, at Ogden, at Logan and at Soda Springs, and a large warehouse at Provo City. The capital stock of the institution is one million dollars, divided into shares of \$100, each. The stock ledger of the institution shows that there are between 700 and 800 stockholders. The business transacted by the institution is general merchandising, wholesale and retail, and in addition the manufacture of boots and shoes, many articles of clothing, and a tannery is successfully operated in the 19th Ward. By the business of the establishment employment is given to 150 hands at the parent store and drug store. At the shoe factory and tannery