

New Year's Pitfall



Powrey
whipped out
his automatic

by
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KEITH POWREY, detective lieutenant commanding the Dress Suit detail, sat in the living room of his apartment at six P.M. on the last day of the year. He was partially attired in formal evening clothes, and was wearing a dressing gown over them.

No pampered son of wealth wore evening dress more frequently or with more distinction than Keith Powrey, for each evening it was his duty to prowl around the lobbies of fashionable hotels and in glamorous night clubs.

Thirty-five, tall and slender, with

patrician features, he was the Nemesis of noted jewel thieves and others who preyed on wealth and society. To keep an eye on them, it was necessary for him to dress properly.

New Year's Eve, when wealthy people were off guard during their merrymaking, was a time Powrey had to be alert and keen in judgment. He made his rounds, doubly cautious behind his outward nonchalance. For there were persons who would have liked nothing better than to remove him from the scene of living men.

A few months before, he had gathered evidence which had sent to prison two members of the notorious Ice Miners gang, noted European jewel thieves. Others of the gang had boasted that they would get even with Powrey.

The Ice Miners, so named by European officials because they dealt principally in diamonds, had secret leaders who communicated with the members through strange channels. The members got orders and got their pay—and received dire punishment if they disobeyed.

Powrey moved with a menace hanging over him, and felt that his feet were on the brink of a pitfall continually. He had been warned by foreign police agents that the gang was diabolically clever. When they struck, it was always in an unusual manner—something spectacular.

In his living room now, Powrey mixed a drink and prepared to relax in an easy chair. But the door buzzer sounded. From a pocket of his dressing gown he drew a little flat automatic and held it as he went to the door. He was always on guard.

"Yes?" he asked.

"It's Battlewagon, Chief."

Powrey opened the door. Into the room stepped a middle-aged, heavily-built man about as different from Powrey in appearance as a man could be.

"Battlewagon" Barnes, Powrey's partner,

was a heavyweight rough-and-tumble fighter and a wicked wrestler. His name was high on the Department's pistol range roster.

BATTLEWAGON, who had a room in the same building, was wearing a dark business suit and a derby hat.

"Come in, Battlewagon, and tryout a chair for size," Powrey invited. "Happy New Year, and all that sort of thing."

"Same to you, Chief."

"Go to the table in the corner and mix yourself a drink."

Battlewagon mixed his drink and lifted the glass in salute. "Here's to the good luck that's kept us both alive another year, Chief!"

"The year won't end for six hours or so," Powrey replied.

As Battlewagon sat down, the telephone bell sounded. Powrey answered: "Powrey speaking."

"Ah, Mr. Powrey!" It was a man's rather oily voice. "This is Nick Dagman, manager of the Club Brilliant."

"Oh yes, Dagman! What is it?"

"This afternoon, when you phoned for a table for two tonight, my employee said we were sold out. That was an error. We'll gladly take care of you this evening."

"Well—" Powrey stalled.

"Please do not be offended. He's a new man, and didn't know your identity. You desire a table for two?"

"That'll be all right," Powrey said. "Thanks, Dagman."

He replaced the phone on the cradle and glanced at Battlewagon.

"That was Nick Dagman, manager of the Club Brilliant," he said. "He was slightly perturbed. He told me that when I phoned this afternoon to reserve a table for two for tonight, his employee made a mistake when he said they were sold out."

"I should believe it! Any time a clip joint like that can't set aside a table for you—"

Powrey raised a hand to stop him. "But now Mr. Dagman assures me a table will be reserved."

"Then everything's all right, Chief."

"Decidedly not! You see, Battlewagon, I didn't phone this afternoon and ask for a table."

Battlewagon sat up straight. "How's that?"

"Somebody must have phoned and pretended to be me. For some reason, somebody wants me to be at the Club Brilliant tonight—sitting at a certain table."

"Nix, Chief! Don't make a target out of yourself. This Ice Miners gang—you don't even know 'em when you see 'em."

"It's the only way to get them into the open, Battlewagon—the only way we'll ever get a crack at them."

"Table for two, huh? Who are you goin' to take with you, Chief?"

"I'll take you along."

Battlewagon showed instant alarm. "Aw, Chief! Do I have to put on my monkey suit?"

"Yes. This is business, Battlewagon. And don't forget your gun, and shove cuffs and a blackjack in your pockets."

The telephone bell jangled again. Powrey answered the call. He heard a man's hoarse, raspy voice:

"Listen, Mr. Powrey! Got to talk quick. This is a friend. Don't go to the Club Brilliant tonight. It'd be dangerous. That's all I can say." The connection was broken.

Powrey's eyes were glittering as he replaced the phone and returned to his chair again. "Battlewagon, that was a gent unknown to me who said he was my friend. He warned me not to go to the Club Brilliant tonight. Naturally I'll ignore the warning. So hurry up and climb into your monkey suit while I get busy on the telephone. We may encounter a little excitement."

"I should believe it!" Battlewagon glared and left to go to his own quarters and assume the attire he disliked. . . .

With Battlewagon stalking stiffly beside him, Powrey entered the Club Brilliant a little after ten. The orchestra was playing, colored lights were flashing, customers were wearing paper hats and blowing horns and trying to dance on the crowded floor, and a host of waiters were scurrying about with loaded trays.

"I'm going to the office to see Dagman," Powrey told Battlewagon. "Pay no attention to me when I return unless I approach you. But watch Nick Dagman if he comes out and spot whoever he speaks to; then report to me."

Powrey ascended the short flight of stairs and at the top found a guard at the office door. The guard knew Powrey.

"Is Dagman in his office?" Powrey asked.

The guard went away but came back immediately and Powrey walked into a lavishly furnished office where Dagman was awaiting him.

He waved Powrey to a chair and closed the door.

"Sorry about the error, lieutenant," Dagman said. "But you can imagine how it's been with us today—a madhouse. Never had so much trouble over reservations."

Powrey looked at the fat little swarthy man who managed the club.

NICK DAGMAN was shaved to the pink and slightly perfumed. His evening clothes were immaculate. His nails glistened with a high polish, and he wore a diamond ring that flashed in the light.

"Some ice," Powrey observed, indicating it. But Dagman only grinned.

"I like the best of everything," Dagman observed.

"Nick, who's the man who made the mistake about my reservation?"

"A new man. Came from London. Fine references. His name is Bert Gadley."

"I'd like to see him, Dagman. Use your

inter-com and get him in here for a moment.”

“Sure, sure, Powrey. Anything you say.” Dagman bent forward and flicked a switch of the inter-com. He asked for Gadley, and in a moment the man replied. Dagman asked a few questions, and finally at Powrey’s nod told the man to come to the office.

“What is all this, Lieutenant?” Dagman asked, then. “If the man is a wrong one, I’ll discharge him.”

“Just introduce him to me, Dagman, then listen.”

Powrey had not used his famous smile since entering the office. A knock sounded on the door, and a man opened it and entered. He was a small man with hair turning gray at his temples, a furtive-looking man with a nervous manner.

“You want me, Mr. Dagman?” he asked.

“Yes, Gadley. This gentleman is Mr. Powrey, of the police. He wanted to meet you.”

“Yes, sir.” Gadley faced Powrey. If he was a wrong one, he was very calm. But Powrey guessed the Ice Miners would have no nervous tyro working with them.

“I understand you’re the man who turned down my request for a reservation this afternoon,” Powrey said.

“I hope you’ll excuse the error, sir. I’m new here, and did not know you were on the official preferred list.”

“Do you remember what I said when you refused a reservation?”

“I—I can’t recall it, sir.”

“Do you remember what time I phoned?”

“Possibly around two, sir.”

“Gadley, you know that I didn’t phone for a reservation! Between one-thirty and four I was in a conference of police officials. We were talking about the Ice Miners.”

Mention of the gang did not cause Gadley to as much as blink. “But, sir, somebody phoned and said his name was

Mr. Keith Powrey.”

Powrey’s gesture stopped him. “You didn’t know my name? Never had heard it before? Didn’t know my official position?”

“No, sir. I wrote ‘Powrey’ on my list—”

“A moment ago, Dagman introduced me simply as Mr. Powrey. And you just called me ‘Keith.’ So you seem to know my first name. If you knew nothing of me—”

Gadley’s face revealed for an instant that he realized he had made a mistake.

“And why did you call me late this afternoon, right after Dagman had assured me I could have a table, and warn me not to come here tonight because it would be dangerous?” Powrey demanded.

Dagman sat up straight. “What’s this? You did that, Gadley?” he asked.

“The gentleman is mistaken, sir,” Gadley said.

“I’m not mistaken,” Powrey declared. “I had Dagman make you talk over the inter-com. You had the same hoarse voice that came to me over the telephone.”

“I—I’m bewildered, Mr. Dagman,” Gadley told the manager. “I can’t understand this.”

Powrey stood up and crumpled his cigarette in an ash tray. “Gadley, I think you’ll bear investigation,” he announced. “I know you’re the man who phoned me. You have an unusual voice. Men who have done a lot of time in stir always have voices like yours. The restrained, down-in-the-throat tones developed by cautious secret speech in prison—it takes them some time to clear up after a man gets out where he can speak openly.” Powrey faced Dagman again. “Send him back to his duties for the present,” he directed the manager.

GADLEY seemed relieved to be dismissed. When he had gone out and closed the door behind him, Powrey bent toward Dagman and spoke in low tones: “If you’re mixed up in anything, Dagman, come

clean with me! It's the only safe way for you. If you happen to know, for instance, that I've been lured here tonight so I can be murdered—"

"Murdered!" Dagman's eyes bulged. "You're exaggerating, Powrey."

"Oh, no, I'm not! I've been put on the spot by a murderous gang. I arrested a couple of their men and had them sent up. They always kill in some sensational manner, Dagman. For your information—You know Captain Tim O'Shea, who handles our raid squad in this part of town, don't you?"

"Yes. But he's never visited here professionally with his squad, thank heaven!"

"Dagman, Tim O'Shea and his tough babies are around this club on all sides right now. It's been arranged. They won't intrude—unless something happens to me. Two plainclothes men you don't know are guests here tonight, and they'll have their eyes on me all the time."

"But this is preposterous!"

Powrey nodded. "It's precaution, Dagman. To get in touch with the Ice Miners, so we can corral some of them, I must make a target of myself. I've known that for some time. They must be brought out into the open. It's a ticklish situation, Dagman, but it's my duty to place myself in it. The Department knows everything I know about this—your phone call, the other one from this man you call Gadley—"

"But I—I'm innocent of wrong, Powrey. Your name was on the list of those who had phoned for reservations and been refused. Because Gadley is new here, I checked the list, found your name and prepared a table and called you."

"You mean Gadley planted that name on the list for you to find?"

"I don't know. Looks like it. He'd deny it, naturally. He'd say it must have been somebody impersonating you."

"I caught him when he used my first name."

"I saw that. But what if you arrest him? You can't prove anything against him, Powrey. If you turn up that he's done time in England or the Continent, all you could do would be deport him as an undesirable alien."

"You're putting up quite an argument for him, aren't you, Dagman?" Powrey was a little sarcastic.

"This has bewildered me." Dagman was perspiring profusely. "What can I do?"

"Come clean with me, Dagman! Tim O'Shea and his tough boys are waiting outside. If something happens to me, and they raid, you'll be hauled to jail, and this fancy clip joint of yours will be ruined, closed forever, as tight as a vacuum can. Got anything to say to me now?"

"I—I don't know what's been planned," Dagman protested.

"But something *has* been planned—is that it?" Powrey demanded.

"I—I got orders by phone. I don't know from whom—"

"Are you in the habit of obeying anonymous orders?"

"You can't understand, Powrey. When I was a young man, over in the old country, I made a mistake. How they learned of it, I don't know. I changed my name and came to the States twenty-five years ago, became a citizen."

"Get down to date," Powrey ordered.

"They threatened to expose me—even to kill me mysteriously—if I didn't do as they ordered."

"The Ice Miners?"

"They said so—yes. All I had to do was see that you were here tonight, to place a table for two in a certain spot, and they—they would do the rest, they said. Now, I've told you. You might as well call in Tim O'Shea and lock me up. They'll get me for this, even in prison. I can't get in touch with

anybody—don't know who they are or where they are."

"How about this man Gadley?"

"He acts like he's one of them, but I'm not sure. And you're not sure. If you take Gadley and me to jail now—"

"They'd simply wait for another chance—I know," Powrey interrupted. "I came here to be a target, and I'll be one."

"It wouldn't do any good for me to talk to Gadley, if he's really one of them. And I don't know how to reach them, and they wouldn't listen to me if I did," Dagman said. "What can I do, Powrey?"

RESTLESSLY Powrey got up and paced around the room thinking. He stopped at the desk finally and looked down at the club manager.

"Your only connection with these Ice Miners is as you've told me?" he asked. "You were just blackmailed into helping set the trap?"

"That's all. I swear it!"

"Very well. Go ahead with your business as if this hadn't happened, Dagman. Don't try to get into communication with any of them. I'll manage matters from now on. First I'm going down to the lobby and greet any friends I meet. Then I'll go to the table you've reserved for me, and help celebrate the arrival of the New Year. Anything special on the program?"

"Only a little midnight stunt. Everybody standing, holding a glass. Lights out, gong strikes twelve, everybody drinks as colored lights come on and flash. A pony chorus girl dressed—or undressed—like the baby New Year, comes on the stage. Then, a dozen more come on and do a dance number—"

"When the lights go out—that'll be when they try it," Powrey decided. "All right, Dagman. Let's go."

Dagman wiped the perspiration from his face and left the office with Powrey. They descended the stairs to the main floor. As

Powrey stopped a cigarette girl to make a purchase, Dagman hurried on. Powrey caught sight of Battlewagon standing off to one side, and nodded. Battlewagon nodded in return, and Powrey knew he would watch Dagman.

But that was not all. In the incoming crowd, Powrey brushed against one of Captain O'Shea's plainclothesmen, now in correct evening dress, and whispered:

"Keep your eyes on Dagman every second. Battlewagon is doing the same."

Powrey gave them plenty of time. But finally he went to the headwaiter and was escorted to his little table for two. As he seated himself, he put a paper hat on his head and picked up the paper horn so he could join in the noisemaking.

Dancers were on the floor, but left it and crowded back to their tables as the music stopped. An empty table for two was almost close enough for Powrey to touch it, its chairs vacant. He had been wondering who sat there.

Now they returned—a pretty woman of perhaps twenty-five and a sleek man, tall and slender. The woman was dressed a trifle flamboyantly, and wore jewels. She was dark, slender, vivacious as she smiled at her companion and talked to him. Her escort was a type Powrey had seen often, the gigolo type. Obviously, both were Latins or French. And as there was a quick lull in the din around him and he heard them speak, their accent bore out his guess.

The woman's eyes flashed as she encountered Powrey's, and she gave him a quick smile.

"What a handsome man to be alone on a night like this," she told her companion, so Powrey could hear. "Ask him to join us, Joe."

Her companion glanced at Powrey also.

"The lady commands, *m'sieu*," he told Powrey, in a foreign accent. "Pardon me. I am Joe Larue. This is *Mademoiselle* Inez

Smith. Only she is a *senorita* instead of a *mademoiselle*, and her name is not Smith. I call her that because her real name is so difficult to pronounce.”

Powrey stood and smiled. “Honored!” he said. “I am waiting for a friend, so may not join you at present.”

“Later perhaps?” the woman said.

They sat at their table. Possibly innocent enough, Powrey knew. Nobody stood on ceremony on such a night, and their table revealed that they had been drinking wine. They could be lonesome aliens wanting companionship—or they could be deadly.

On Powrey’s other side was another table he almost could touch. At it sat a middle-aged couple, obviously English. The man was a perfect John Bull type, and the woman with him was evidently attempting to preserve a stiff decorum in the midst of the noisy riot. Powrey’s quick glance caught them inspecting him, and they looked away instantly.

Possibly only innocent night club guests—but who could tell? The persons at both tables were within easy touch of him. Behind him was the vacancy of a narrow aisle. In front of him was a large potted palm banked with greenery and flowers. Powrey noted that the other potted palms had been removed, but this remained.

A PITFALL! A spot for a trap. A dark moment at the commencement of the New Year. These people crowding in on him, possibly somebody coming around that bank of flowers, the quick thrust of a knife in the darkness, an automatic’s quick flame and bark, and it would be over for Keith Powrey.

Battlewagon lumbered down the aisle and sat across the small table from Powrey.

“Here you are!” Powrey greeted, as if their meeting had been prearranged and Battlewagon had arrived at the rendezvous late. “Thought you were never coming.”

“Got delayed,” Battlewagon replied. He did not call Powrey “Chief” now.

“Hold it down,” Powrey whispered to him, as he put a cigarette in his mouth. That was the tip to Battlewagon not to let those near overhear their talk.

A perspiring waiter appeared at the table.

“Brandy snifters,” Powrey said.

“And what brand, sir?”

“I’ve brought my own flask—rare old stuff for an occasion like this. We’ll have wine later, perhaps.”

The waiter bowed and smiled and hurried away to get the snifters. Powrey had no doubt that the waiter had orders to serve their table well.

The snifters came. Powrey brought forth a silver flask and poured the liquor. He and Battlewagon nursed the snifters with their palms. Bending forward to catch the aroma of the liquor gave them a chance to hold whispered conversation.

“I eyed Dagman,” Battlewagon reported. “He went to the reservation office and talked to that little guy who was up in the office while you were there.”

“Interesting,” Powrey replied. “That little guy is a bad one. Eyes open for him. What else?”

“Dagman stood at the edge of the floor, and when he had a chance he talked a little to that couple at the table on your right.”

“Ah? They tried to get a rise from me just before you came to the table. Obviously Europeans, and possibly Ice Miners.”

“And that ain’t all,” Battlewagon added. “This couple on the other side—Dagman had a couple of words with them, too. Chief, they’re all around you.”

“That’s my idea, Battlewagon.”

“What’re you goin’ to do?”

“Can’t do anything till they make a move and come out into the open. Stand by and be ready for action, at midnight, Battlewagon, when the lights go out.”

"Lights go— Chief, don't be a fool! The game ain't worth it. With the lights out, and this mob, you'll be on a spot."

"I know all that, Battlewagon. Sniff your brandy and watch, that's all now. When the lights do go out, move back by that bank of flowers and the palm, and be ready to use a gun quick. And try to act natural now. Our every move is probably being watched."

Powrey glanced around, and saw Tim O'Shea's man in the near distance. Nick Dagman was moving around greeting those he knew and watching the conduct of his waiters, and O'Shea's man was watching him closely.

"Ten minutes till midnight," Battlewagon whispered.

The busy waiter paused beside the table, and Powrey ordered champagne. It was brought, opened and poured, and Powrey toyed with his glass while Battlewagon kept glancing around at those nearest.

"I don't feel right in this monkey suit, Chief," Battlewagon whispered. "My muscles feel all tied up."

"You'll live through it," Powrey replied, chuckling. "Remember what I said to do when the lights go out."

"Anybody makes a move at you, I'll blast 'em!"

"We want them alive," Powrey reminded him. "We want to sweat something out of them. The boys at Headquarters can do it. But maybe they won't make a move. We aren't sure, Battlewagon. If they've spotted Tim O'Shea's men outside, they may call it off."

"I don't like this battlin' in the dark, Chief. I like to know who I'm scrappin' with."

"So do I, Battlewagon, but it can't always be done."

The man who had called himself Joe Larue and the woman he had named Inez Smith were dancing again, but now returned to their table.

"So that's the guest you were waiting for," the woman said to Powrey. "And I had expected to see a beautiful girl."

"Old pals celebrating," Powrey suggested.

SHE FLASHED a smile at him. "Join us after the New Year arrives," she invited. "We'll crack a fresh bottle."

"Some cutie," Battlewagon whispered, as they went on to their table. "And Dagman chattin' with her and that guy."

"They may be in on it, Battlewagon. Watch yourself. If they have gone to the trouble to spot me, learn my habits and all about me, they know very well that you work as my partner. So you may be a marked man, too, especially if they think you may get in their way."

"I'll have my eyes open, all right. Chief, that couple on the other side are watchin' you all the time, and they're glancin' behind that bank of flowers and the palm, like they were lookin' at somebody there."

"They may be in on it, too, Battlewagon. Watch 'em!"

The music stopped. The club's master of ceremonies yelled for attention, and the place grew reasonably quiet.

"Three minutes until midnight!" he called. "A new year is about to be born. Fill your glasses, everybody, and please stand. Sing when the orchestra plays *Auld Lang Syne*. And everybody watch the stage, please! The cutest little new year you ever saw will come forth to greet you."

The orchestra began playing softly. The guests stood, holding glasses, and sang with the music, mostly discordant.

Keith Powrey felt his body tighten. He moved his left arm slightly and felt his shoulder holster and the flat automatic that reposed in it. He stood so he could put his glass down on the table quickly and draw the weapon.

He glanced around rapidly as the song

ended. The master of ceremonies was shouting:

"One minute to go! Everybody stand ready!"

Battlewagon's face was grim as he glanced around swiftly. Powrey saw Tim O'Shea's man moving toward him. That probably meant that Nick Dagman had retired to his office, to be able to say he was there when the thing happened.

The man who looked like John Bull and the woman who seemed to be his wife had stepped aside slightly, as if taking up a prearranged position. What was behind the potted palm, Powrey could not see.

A gong chimed—the lights went out.

"Happy New Year!" the master of ceremonies shouted.

A chorus of cries and shouts answered him. Powrey had moved a couple of feet to his left, and whipped out his automatic.

Then he felt a blow between his shoulder blades, and something bit into his skin enough to break it. He swerved and lashed out with the gun, and cut a human face that was only a white blur in the scant light that came from the legal exit signs.

Despite the din, he heard a quick shuffle of feet near him, heard a chair crash over. He grappled with the man he had struck and sprawled with him to the floor. A woman screamed. A police whistle cut through the noise.

The lights came on, flashing colored lights as the almost-naked pony chorus girl rushed upon the stage, and others lined up behind her as the orchestra began playing.

A gun flamed and cracked as Battlewagon lurched forward. Into the room rushed Captain Tim O'Shea's men, some to stop and guard exits, others with O'Shea leading to rush to Powrey.

Women began screaming again. O'Shea's men surrounded Powrey and Battlewagon—and Joe Larue and the woman

he had called Inez Smith. "You all right, Powrey?" O'Shea barked.

"Okay! Take this man! Grab that woman! Get that middle-aged couple there!"

O'Shea's men were quick. They made the seizures, and also picked up a man behind the potted palm, who held a gun, before he had time to discard the weapon. Battlewagon moved a few feet and stood over Bert Gadley, who sprawled on the floor with blood oozing from a shoulder wound and a gun on the floor beside him.

Down the stairs from the mezzanine came two officers with Nick Dagman between them.

"What—what's this mean?" Joe Larue was shouting, as he was helped to his feet.

Waiters were driving the crowd back, yelling to them to keep quiet. Powrey had to shout at O'Shea to make him understand.

"Take these people in," he ordered. "Sweat 'em and double-check 'em. This man—" he indicated Larue—"tried to stab me between the shoulder blades. There's the knife on the floor. And there's the handkerchief he held it with, to dodge fingerprints. I felt the blow; it got through and cut my skin a bit."

AN EXPRESSION of concern crossed O'Shea's Irish red face.

"Sure you're not bad hurt?"

"I'm all right because I had my protector on," Powrey replied. "I could guard my front, but not my back."

"Protector?"

"Had it made some time ago," Powrey said. "A thing of thin, tough chain mail. It fits my shoulders and back down to my waist, and goes around my throat. It stopped even that slender knife. I'd have been found on the floor when the lights came on, stabbed to death. Everybody would have been horrified—"

"These people?" O'Shea hinted.

“Oh, they’d have said it couldn’t have been them who did it. They had just invited Battlewagon and me to have wine with them after midnight. That older couple---I think a check of them will reveal something, too. Who’d you shoot, Battlewagon?”

“This little guy they call Gadley. He had a gun out and was liftin’ it to blast you. Backin’ up the knife guy’s play.”

Captain Tim O’Shea shouted and got attention from at least those nearest.

“This place is raided!” he yelled. “Get your things and beat it! Go somewhere else—or go home! The party’s over.”

The Club Brilliant collected few table checks that night.

The guests streamed out. Sirens wailed in the street, and more policemen charged into the place. Stretcher bearers carried the wounded Bert Gadley. Powrey stripped off

his coat and dress shirt and exposed his shield of back mail, and removed it so a police surgeon could look at the scratch the knife had made and doctor it against infection.

“I’m goin’ to get me one of them things,” Battlewagon said, as he helped Powrey dress again. “You’ll need a new monkey suit coat, Chief. Bad slit in this one. Monkey suits—I don’t like ‘em.”

“Let’s get our coats and hats and take a little ride down to Headquarters, Battlewagon, and turn in reports,” Powrey suggested. “Then we’ll go home and welcome the New Year privately in seclusion and quiet. We’ve had enough excitement for one evening.”

“I should believe it!” Battlewagon affirmed.