

A CHRISTMAS PRESENT.



VERY unhappy maiden was Constance Lester. Perhaps, among the thousands of miserables, who awaited the Christmas tide in the great city, there were many more hopeless and wretched, but surely none more discontented and unhappy. And her grief was the greater because it was of a secret nature that she could confide to nobody. Alone she must meet her fate—alone decide a question that, however she might cast her verdict, seemed fraught with utter misery to herself and others.

"Why not, Constance?" "Oh, mother, you know I cannot. I do not see why," continued Mrs. Lester, in the selfishly insistent tone

that had become almost a second part of her nature. "Oh, Constance, you can't realize how this dreadful city life is wearing me out. There is not an hour of the day that I do not sigh for the dear old home where we were so happy, and I know I shall die unless I go back. I merely dropped the mildest hint to Mr. Day, and he instantly was full of sympathy, and he promised that one of the first things he should do after you were his wife would be to buy back the old home and fit it up as a country residence. He would expect to live there most of each year, spending only the winter in town, and it would be such a happiness to pass my last years there. Now, what can you have against Mr. Day?"

"Nothing, mother, nothing; but it is impossible. He has been the kindest of benefactors, and I know I ought to be honored by his offer, but I cannot love him."

which she could find no excuse for declining. Then had followed an invitation to the Charity Ball, one of the most fashionable events of the great city's social life, and her mother's intercessions and fear of offending a benefactor had forced her to accept that also. And now had come the crisis. Mr. Day had visited her mother, and announced his wish to make Constance his wife, and to lay his fortune at her feet.

"Were it not for Harold?" she had murmured in her secret heart, when the astounding news was told her. She well realized the selfish common sense of her mother's view of the matter. Mr. Day was a brilliant and eligible match for a penniless girl of twenty, as the ways of society went. She honored and almost revered him, but how could she marry him? She caught at her mother's last words.

"You would not have me marry for money, anyway?" "Not for money, my dear; but for your poor, sick mother—and the old home!"

"This was the condition of things that had induced Constance to write to her lover the most pitiful of all letters, and had blotted every ray of happiness out of her life. Harold Cowen had not answered her letter, but instead had sent a curt telegram: 'Look out for Christmas present.' This enigmatical message only added doubt and perplexity to her almost unbearable load of sorrow.

"Package, ma'am! Miss Constance Lester. No, ma'am, nothing to pay. All right!" The blue cap, brass plate, and red face of Expressman Sharkey disappeared as quickly as they had appeared, for it was the day before Christmas, and there was not a busier or jollier agent of Santa Claus in the whole big city.

"Why, mother," she cried, "this is a deed for the old home, made out in my name. And here is a note from Mr. Cowen pinned to it, saying: 'The deed is all right. The old home is yours again. I will call on you, Christmas and explain.'"

"I knew it," was Mrs. Lester's surprising ejaculation. "Oh, Constance, has discovered the truth. Mr. Cowen has found the fraud. I knew your father was never a bankrupt. It was all a conspiracy. And that young lawyer has been too sharp for them. Oh, thank the Lord for all his goodness!"

GENERAL NEWS.

A Boston athlete, Frank E. Godfrey, an instructor in the Young Men's Christian Union, slipped and fell and broke his neck, on Wednesday evening of last week. Standing on the shoulders of a companion, he meant to turn a somersault, but slipping, he lost his purchase in the start, and consequently, failed to turn far enough. In physical proportions he was a model, having served at the World's Fair as a model for the statue representing the "Ideal of the American Student."

A rural politician was in town a few days after the election and was met on the street by a very portly gentleman, when the following conversation occurred: Rural Politician—"Scuse me, but you have the advantage of me. I—"

Nothing in this country or in England, it is said, will approach the new dormitory buildings of the University of Pennsylvania, in magnificence. The building will cover a space of about twenty-five acres, and their entire cost will be \$5,000,000.

Now the Turks are mad at us and say American newspapers must stay out of Turkey. It all because some editor presumed to criticize the Armenian massacres in which no doubt the characteristic cruelties of the Turks were well portrayed. The United States can manage to worry along without catering much to Turkey. If she is able to thrive as a nation by stifling righteous criticism through the public press, she will do better than any nation we have ever yet heard of that has been afflicted with that foolish idea.

It is given as the unofficial opinion of the Attorney-General of Pennsylvania that man and wife cannot be counted as two persons in a charter.

An advertiser says to the public in an exchange, "Have you seen King's china? It is simply out of sight."

It is claimed that the soft coal market is in very bad shape at present.

Besides China and Japan grave and war like trouble is settling down upon Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Honduras and Salvador. In fact ugly war clouds are lowering generally, and the prospects of war abroad are favorable to nations at peace, since they are generally called upon to keep up the extraordinary and extravagant requisitions of food, clothing, ammunition, &c.

Never have glasses and spectacles been so much worn. They may be seen on the tiniest children. Lots of doctors in cases of contused headache and cranial troubles now send children to an oculist. Eye strain and irritability of temper are also frequently associated, it is said, and some persons with tumultuous tempers have been made as gentle as doves by the prescription of a good pair of spectacles.

Harry Allen Locke, a New Jersey lawyer, has finally locked himself up in jail through an over indulgence in whiskey. With wife No. 1 and No. 2 appearing against him at the same time he is in a bad fix.

Rev. Dr. Swing's earthly possessions amounting to about \$80,000 makes it clear that something can be earned at preaching—that is if the disposition, location and ability are not wanting.

Rev. Dr. Buck, an Evangelical preacher whose past record stands in the way of present sympathy from the piously inclined, was recently convicted in the criminal court of Baltimore for obtaining money under false pretences. Though said to be venerable looking, his acts do not fully comport with his looks, inasmuch as this is said to be the third time the doctor has reached jail for the same offence.

Lung Sang sang not long in Bloomsburg. His "washee" business met with too much foreign and American competition to thrive, and a recent black eye indicated that he could get all the war he wanted without hunting for victorious Japanese or leaving the land of the free.

Now Russia would like to know what Japan means by refusing China's peace proposals, and she thinks it incumbent upon other powers to demand explanation as to Japan's ultimate objects.

The are some obstacles that even a well organized and expert foot-ball team can't well get over and live—such, for instance, as a train of cars striking them unawares. They appear to be equal to almost any other emergency.

Miss Stevenson, the Vice-Presidents daughter who was recently pronounced as beyond hope of recovery from her ailments, is now said to be improving.

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