A CHRISTMAS PRESENT.



VERY unhappy maiden was Con-Perhaps, among the thousands of niserables, who waited the miserables, Christmas tide in the great city, here 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.

Constance Lester was one of those sweet and loving natures that seek happiness only in the happiness of others. Selfishness was utterly foreign to her. She had been born and reared in the lap of comfort and case. Her father had been a well-to-do merchant in a suburban town, a busy, btg-hearted man, who had taken pains to surround his family, which consisted only of his wife and daughter, with every luxury that his purse could provide. His death, which occurred suddenly from a carriage accident, had left his family in apparent comfort, but within a year the firm of which he had been a member failed, and the failure swallowed up not only the por-tion of the widow and orphan, but eventually deprived them of the comfortable home that had been a very ark of refuge in their troubles.

The blow was a sad one to Mrs. Lester. She was a semi-invalid, and years of suffering had worn her nature into that form of shrinking and half querulous selfishness that is contented with nothing but absolute protec-tion from the chances of life. It almost killed her to give up her home, but there was no alternative Constance had met the crisis with true heroism. A chance was opened for her to secure employment in the city in a business house that had formerly dealt largely with her father's firm, and the head of which had felt honored by his personal friendship. So the brave girl soon had her ailing mother established in a comfortable flat, while she spent certain hours each day over a big ledger in the fa-mous wholesale house of Day & Co.

All might have been well had not Constance been as pretty as she was sweet of character, and had she not had a secret. Ah, that secret! Be-fore she had left Westbridge, their country home, she had become engaged to a young lawyer, one Harold Cowen, who, while not quite a "brief-less barrister," had yet his fortune and fame to make. She had not confided this secret to her mother, as it would only have added to her trou-bles. She and Harold had known each other long; he had been a true friend and legal adviser in her time of trouble; friendship and mutual sympathy had ripened into love, and they had with the most sacred of all earthly pledges between them. Each believed that they had years to wait; and was resolved to wait patiently the fruition of their hopes.

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



In the Old Home

that had became 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 midest hint to Mr. Day, and he in-stantly 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.

"Nonsense, my child. What do you know about love? Any good woman could learn to love Mr. Day. He is not so old-what is three and fifty nowadays? It is but vigorous man-hood for a man who has devoted himself to business and disregarded the dissipations of life. I am sure he is noble, high-minded, generous to a fault and very rich, my dear. Why, any girl would consider it a chance among a thousand, Surely, Constance, you would not throw away such a chance to provide for yourself and

Poor Constance! What could she eply? The attentions Mr. Day had shown her had not at first excited her suspicions. They were so delicate that she accepted them merely as a con-tinuance of the kindness that seemed a part of his nature. But suddenly her eyes had beer opened by an invita-tion to accompany him to the opera,

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 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 mat-ter. Mr. Day was a brilliant and eli-gible 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, mother?" "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.

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.
"What can it be, Constance?" ask-

ed Mrs. Lester, all alive with curiosity. "I do not know, mother." Constance's cheeks were pale. Her

hands trembled. For a moment she felt that she would faint. She somehow knew that her fate was bound up in that mysterious package. At last she summoned all her strength, and cut the strings. Inside the wrappings was a plain white pasteboard box, oblong in shape. This she opened, and drew from it a paper folded, sub-scribed and sealed in legal form. She opened it, studied it a few moments in a dazed way, and then the hot blood mantled to her cheeks and fore-

"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 sur-

prising ejaculation. "Oh, Constance, he 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 good-

"The fact of the matter is," said Harold Cowen the next day, in the ex-planation that necessarily preceded the Christmas dinner in the little flat, at which he was a most welcome guest, "I suspected from the first your mother was right in thinking there was a fraud. Mr. Lester was not a man to put up the inheritance of his wife and child as a security for business deals. But he might have kept his private papers in the company's safe at his office. This, in fact, he did do. Now, I got evidence to make it pretty clear that the issuing of stock in the store business in your father's name. with the deeds and other securities as collateral, was really an outright piece of fraud. When I made this clear to the reorganized firm, we had a pretty hot time. They denied everything, and swore they would fight it through every court in the State. But when I began to talk of the Grand Jury, they grew more reasonable. Really, it might have been a long and doubtful contest. There were rather too big men-honorable careers, church members, and all that-to be dragged through a grand jury inquest. When they proposed to settle by restoring every dollar they had wrongfully taken, I thought it better than years of legal fight, which, indeed, I did not have the means to make. The deed of the old home was in your name, "I knew it, and it was with my

consent, of course," said Mrs. Lester. "And now, mother, what is to be Mr. Cowen's reward?" asked Constance, suddenly. "Reward?" faintly queried the

"Yes: I promised him a year ago that I would marry him when the old home was once more my own. You know lawyer's fees must be paid. Don't you think he has earned his re-

ward, and a Christmas dinner?"
"Really, Constance," faitered the mother, "you were in love, then?"
"Yes, mother." "And you thought of me and the old

"Yes, mother; you and the old home were part of the bargain. I really think the promise must be kept. I would be sorry for Mr. Day, did I not know he can easily get a better and more suitable wife."

"Poor Mr. Day!" murmured the But there was no cloud on the Christmas dinner in the little flat.—

Julia Kent.

The Ascension.

GENERAL NEWS.

A Boston athlete, Frank E. Godfrey, an iustructor in the Young Men's Christian Un-ion, slipped and fell and broke his neck, on Wednesday evening of last week. Standing on the shoulders of a companion, he meant 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 pro-portions he was a model, having served at the World's Fair as a model for the statue representing the "Ideal of the American Student." 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 followng conversation occurred : Rural Politician—"Scuse me, but you

have the advantage of me. I-I-"

Fortly Gentleman—"You ought to be familiar with my name—Savage, Savage."

"Savage—Sav—where did I hear that name, anyway?"

Portly Gentleman-" Why you old mullet head, I ran for State Senator only two weeks

Rural Politician—"O-o-h, yes! Did they have your name on the ticket?" And the stone pavement failed to open and let the portly gentleman drop out of sight.— "Clearfield Republican."

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 Tur-key. Its all because some editor presumed to criticise 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 (wellshides).

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

It is claimed that the soft coal market is n 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 tini-est children. Lots of doctors in cases of continued 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 wedlock. 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 was recently convicted in the criminal court of Baltimore for obtaining money under false pretences. Though said to be venerable looking his acts don't fully comport with his looks, inasmuch as this is said to he the third time the doctor has reached ail 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 pro-posals, 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

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

In Budapesth they are still pestered with volves. A recent dispatch says that a wedding party (or at least thirteen of them) were torn to pieces and devoured by these ravenous beasts not long ago while returning to their homes from the village of Hidos. The survivors made their way to the nearest village and a relief party was at once organized. Proceeding immediately to the scene of slaughter they found nothing but scattered fragments of flesh, bones and clothing.

Japan recently paid in gold, cash down, \$1,000,000 for the celebrated warship and cruiser Esmeralda. She bought her of Chili indirectly, or through Ecuador. If China pays Japan the many millions she ex-acts as war incemnity, she can fix up a right formidable navy without exhausting her war earnings. Japan is making money

Lee Gom Yeum is in jailtbecause of the recent sudden death of Lee Hung Quong, a fellow companion and countryman with whom he quarreled about the root of evil in

Yeum admitted shooting Quong, but asserted that he did it in self-defense, as Quong had drawn a knife on him.

Out in Fargo, North Dakota, Aaron Hirschfield sought divorce. But the court decreed his fastness. And he didn't get it, of course. Mr. Hirschfield has a million, and he also has an heir (in the land of Hiawatha) and she's said to be quite fair.

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If buying where it's crowded is attraction.

If seeing thousands of Suits is attraction.

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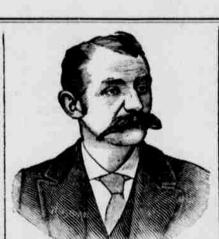
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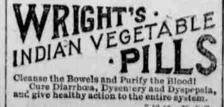
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