



CHRISTMAS WAS... Winds whistle shrill, by and call; Little care now, Little we fear, Weather with- out, Shout about the mangled tree, -Thackeray.

ONE CHRISTMAS TIME.

By MARK LEMON.

"Dance with me, Letty Green," said George Poynter, to a pretty girl with blue eyes and hair that shamed the moon.

Her ample dress was of the purest white satin, fastened at the sleeves and round the waist with blue ribbon—bluer than her eyes.

"Yes," in word Letty, "I want to dance with you."

The dance at an end, Letty tried to smooch her golden curls into order with her little hands, and then, opening her pretty eyes to their full, said:

"George Poynter, I should like some ornaments."

"Yes, Letty," said the young gentleman, and he took her hand and led her to a small room, fastened at the sleeves and round the waist with blue ribbon—bluer than her eyes.

"I have—I do strive," replied George, looking away from Letty, "but remember what has come to me. Two years ago my father died. A year before that villain, Jackson, ruined my father—broke his heart—killed him. O Letty! what have I done to deserve this? What can I do?"

"I'll be there in time," replied Chauncey. "I suppose her father will give her away—in full costume, cocked hat, staff, and all that."

much dignity, and Becky at that moment calling "Mother!" in rather a hysterical tone, Chauncey was allowed to find his way out of the shop as he pleased.

On the following morning Chauncey was at the church of St. Mary Axe a quarter of an hour before the time appointed for the ceremony which was to unite Miss Beadle and somebody to their lives' end.

A hale old gentleman between 60 and 70, perhaps, was the next arrival. Having made some very confidential communication to the old pew opener, he was conducted, evidently in great trepidation, to the vestry, and there immured until the arrival of the tobaccoist and family—but without the emblematical Scotchman Chauncey concluded therefore that Miss Beadle had captivated the old gentleman now awaiting his doom in the condemned cell called the vestry.

The Beadle was in mufti, but his costume still partook of the splendor of his office, and a canary-colored waistcoat with glittering buttons of ruby glass rendered him somewhat conspicuous even in the gloom of St. Mary Axe. His general expression and bearing was that of a tempered indignation, as though he were about to consent to the infliction of some injury which he could avoid if he pleased. A word, a look, might have provoked him to have torn the license from the parson's hands and to have dragged his daughter from the altar. He was therefore allowed to walk up the aisle unmolested.

Mrs. Beadle was very lively on her entrance to the church—more lively, perhaps, than black tea and the occasion warranted; but, whatever had been the stimulating cause of her cheerfulness, it ran in venous drops from her eyes as she approached the altar, and must have been exhausted entirely by the end of the ceremony. Nibble weeping for her children would have been a dry nurse compared with Mrs. Beadle.

Miss Beadle was resigned, as became her to be at 31. With closed eyes and drooping head she leaned upon her mother's arm until, with pardonable confusion, she released her hand to put up her parasol as she drew near the altar.

Chauncey rushed to her relief, and with some difficulty possessed himself of the incumbence, and as there were no attendant bridesmaids the impudent fellow attached himself to the wedding party, to be, as he said, "generally useful and to pick up the pieces."

The ceremony proceeded with all proper solemnity, but there was some association with the name of one of the contracting parties which made Chauncey fairly start, and then determine to witness the signing of the certificate, to satisfy a doubt which had suddenly entered his mind.

The wedding party retired to the vestry when "Amencement" had ended the ceremony, and proceeded to sign the registers attesting the union which had just been solemnized. Mr. Chauncey Gibbs was being, as he said, a family friend, signed also, and there read—what had better be revealed in the next chapter.

Any one had only to have walked down the high street of St. Gnat's to have known that Chauncey was at hand. The process' windows were overrunning with lusciousness; the butchers' shops were so choked full of beef and mutton that the butchers themselves would have to cut their way out into the street; the poulterers had laid in such stocks of turkeys, geese and chickens that Eulabage's calculating machine could alone have computed them—mere human intellect would have failed. The window frames of the houses seemed sprouting with holly and the ivy green, and no doubt but mistletoe hung, kiss provoking, within.

Mrs. Green had made every room in her cottage an anagram of her name, as it was the sacred house forgotten on the young people's account," she said, "though Letty and George had long ceased to want an excuse for a kiss."

George Poynter was waiting the arrival of his friend, Chauncey Gibbs. A glorious fire blazed within the grate; the table was spread to welcome the coming guest, for whose delectation a faultless rumpsteak was being browned in the oven. The train, punctual to its time, was heard screaming into the station close by, and in a few minutes after the two friends were together.

If you are hungry it is tantalizing to listen to the particulars of a dinner you are not to share; if you are sated, you are bored by the recitation of dainties you care not to touch, and therefore will allow the friends to take their meal in peace. No doubt we will join their after next when two or three old cronies came in and made a drink of it, until George and Chauncey caught their beds fairly tired out with jollity.

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