

MAY CRAWFORD'S LAST QUARREL.

A STORY OF CHRISTMAS EVE.

BY NELLIE DARLINGTON.

It was by no means the first, though they had been married now for nearly a year; and people are supposed to have exhausted all disagreements of that kind when the lover places the plain gold circle on his sweetheart's third finger, left hand.

The trouble was, that May Crawford was of an unfortunately jealous disposition; while Linley Crawford could not comprehend the tortures of that demon-like passion.

One night he came home later than usual. It was Christmas Eve, and the first since he had married May. Everything had gone wrong with him that day save one, but that was something he had set his heart on for a long while; and the fact of having accomplished it at last had done much to console him.

But when his pretty wife met him with cold, averted looks, his heart sank, and he wondered in his mind what he could possibly have done to deserve such a reception. Then the dinner was not well cooked, and was served in very unsatisfactory style, the reason being that May, absorbed in her bugbear of a grievance, had omitted to give it that personal superintendence which always insured its success.

"I didn't really expect you to dinner," said May, "and so I didn't care enough about dinner for myself alone to take any trouble about serving it nicely."

Linley looked up surprised. "Why, May! I so seldom stay away from dinner—never without sending you word. And on Christmas Eve, of all nights, what could make you fancy that I wouldn't come home?"

"I thought that you might stay and dine with Mrs. Rockford, since you've been there nearly all day as it is—"

"What do you mean, May. Who told you such a falsehood?"

"No one told me except my own eyes, and I suppose even you, will not contradict that evidence."

"But I will, though, or any other evidence that would persuade you of such a thing—"

"Why, Linley, I saw you about twelve o'clock going into Rockford's store, and Mrs. Rockford was standing at your side; and not half an hour afterward I saw you walking together in the street. It must have been at least three hours later, when, returning home I passed Mr. Rockford's store again, and there you were, so close in conversation with his wife that neither of you saw me, though I looked in through the door straight into both your faces."

"And you didn't come in and speak to me, May!" said Linley Crawford.

"Not I." And Mrs. Crawford tossed her head. "I may be a fool, but I'm not quite such a fool as to interrupt a couple of old lovers when they are enjoying a little quiet flirtation in the absence of the respective husband and wife of each."

"May!" exclaimed Linley, shocked at this remark, and yet painfully aware that circumstances were much against him, though he was upheld by the consciousness of innocence, and knew very well that a few words from him could not only explain the situation, but also cover May with repentant shame for her doubts; but those words he particularly did not wish to speak just then.

May was made furious by his silence, and more still by the indignant, shocked tone in which he had spoken her name—the only remonstrance he deigned to make to her accusing words.

"I suppose you will not dare to say that Kate Rockford and you were not sweethearts before you met me? Oh, I suppose you were telling her how you regretted the past, and wishing it was last Christmas instead of this, that you might once more have the choice of marrying her instead of me? You were—you were! You can't contradict me!"

And, carried away by a jealous rage, May Crawford stamped her foot angrily, and, for the first time in all their quarrels, Linley answered, angrily, and, perhaps, with a touch of contempt, for his patience was sorely tried:

"I shall certainly not take the trouble to contradict you in this or any similar matter, now or ever, any more. I really think you mean to cultivate your tendency to jealousy into downright insanity. It is a monomania now."

May was absolutely aghast. Never before had Linley answered her in this manner. He had always explained, protested, declared his love for her, petted and kissed her, till it really was almost an inducement to quarrel for the sake of making up again. But now he would not even deign to contradict the worst and cruelest things she had ever accused him of. And why? Because he couldn't. Because they were true, and she had seen his perfidy, and further denial was useless.

"Yes, yes, this must be the terrible reason why he no longer explained and protested—no longer declared that she was his first and only love. She burst into a passion of tears at the terrible thought, and, flinging herself down on the sofa, buried her head in the cushions sobbing wildly.

Linley, with his match-box, his cigars, and his ash-tray, betook himself to the library, for this time he determined to try the effect of a little wholesome sternness, and he knew well that he couldn't hold out long if he staid there in sight of May's tears and listening to her sobs.

As the door closed after him, Mrs. Crawford looked up and saw that she was alone. Her sobs ceased, and her tears seemed frozen at their source, but not because she had no longer a witness

to her grief. Oh, no; it was because, foolish and causeless as her jealousy was, it was so terribly real.

"He leaves me," she thought. "Ah, then, all is over indeed, he loves me no longer. He never loved me. Well, then I will go. My mother will take me back again. I am not quite forsaken in all the world. A mother never ceases to love her child, and I scorn to remain longer where I am not loved, even if it kills me to leave him."

She dried her eyes, went to her room, and hastily dressed, and then with her veil down, she might be less likely to attract attention, she stole softly down stairs, and out by the front door, which she closed so gently that no one noticed the sound.

The sky had been dark and lowering all the afternoon, and already the snow was coming down with that fine, steady, continuous shower of flakes, that betokened a heavy snow-storm. But May cared nothing for that. Indeed, she scarcely noticed it.

Their house was on the outskirts of the little village town that, a few years ago, was only a village, and her mother's house was about three miles farther on, and quite out in the country. But May had been brought up a country girl, and to her three miles, even in a snow-storm, was only a pleasant walk—at least it would have been had she been the happy, light-hearted girl she used to be. As it was, she thought nothing about it.

At first she walked rapidly and bravely, only conscious now and then how bitterly cold the wind was becoming, when it drove the now thickly falling snow against her face; then the tingling of her fingers made her wish that in her hurry she had not forgotten her muff. But she never dreamed of turning back; but by and by she pulled off her veil, for frozen stiff as it now was, with the moisture of her breath and the pelting of the snow against it, it had become far worse than no defense against the storm.

It was quite dark now, for the light of the town had quite faded in the distance; but, dark as it was, May discerned an unfamiliar look in the landscape. She stood still and gazed about her; and then a chill, colder than the icy wind, struck her heart. She was not on the road to her mother's house. In the driving snow-storm, the darkness, and, worst of all, her own wild and whirling thoughts, she had missed her way.

But after the first terror she called back her courage, and remembered that she knew all that part of the country pretty well, and she could not be very far wrong. Then she struggled on a little way, and came to a turning which she felt sure would lead her back into the right road.

But the snow kept falling heavier and heavier; familiar landmarks were all wiped out, even if there had been daylight to guide her, and she was obliged to depend solely to that dim, deceptive light which in a snow-storm seems to come from the snow itself. Still she struggled on, but her feet were now heavy with the snow that clung to the soles of her shoes; her skirts were damp and borne down with the wet slush that hung upon them and weighed her down; the wind was like a breath from the sea; and her face ached with its cutting, biting caress; her eyes smarted with pain, and tears gushed from them and froze upon her lashes.

She fancied once or twice that she could see a light ahead, but her vision was at fault, and she could not determine if it was the dazzle of snow and tears mingling in her eyes together, or really a light which gleamed in the distance ahead of her. She was, oh, so tired and so cold; and then, worse still, a stupor, a numbness, an irresistible desire for rest and sleep, came upon her—a last despairing thought, that to pause now, to rest, to sleep, was death; then a sense of utter, hopeless weariness impossible to fight against, one last gasping sigh for love and Linley—a desperate sob, and a very bitter cry in which she could hear her own voice as if far away: "What matter if I die, since he doesn't love me!"

And then a stumble in the snow, and poor little May lay at full length among the cold white mass—a soft, yielding pile of it for a couch, and clouds of it descending for a covering.

Linley had smoked his cigar, and the tranquilizing effect which the votaries of tobacco ascribe to it having soothed his wounded feelings and charmed away the unwonted sternness of his mood, he was bethinking him of some way in which he could make up this latest love-quarrel without seeming to be guilty of his usual weakness in yielding, when the front-door bell was loudly rung, and the maid brought in two parcels—one a rather large one, the other very small, and delivered them to her master.

"The very thing," thought Linley. "Christmas gifts can be given just as well on Christmas Eve. I will give them to her without a word in refer-

ence to this folly of hers, and I can contrive, without entering into any explanation, just to mention how Mrs. Rockford, being of about the same size and form as May, was kind enough to help me choose the sealskin cloak, since otherwise I would have been cheated."

All this passed through Crawford's mind in an instant, while aloud he sent the servant to find her mistress, and beg her to come to him.

During the girl's absence he unfastened the large bundle and took out a superb sealskin cloak; then he undid the small parcel and opened a lovely velvet case, which contained an exquisite pair of diamond ear-rings, for which May Crawford had sighed for many a day. Mary, the servant, then returned, and said Mrs. Crawford was not in her room, and she couldn't think where she could be.

"Well, of course, my girl, she's somewhere," said Linley, impatiently. "Look in the other rooms and be quick. I want to see your mistress at once."

But Mary's search was all in vain. Mrs. Crawford was not in the house, and no one could hazard the faintest guess as to where she was to be found.

A great fear came upon Linley; and then, like a ray of light it flashed on his memory how his jealous little wife had often threatened to leave him and return to her mother. This time she had not threatened—she had done it.

"Oh, May! May, child! Is it possible you can have been so cruel!" he said.

And then, without an instant's delay, Crawford prepared to go in search of her. To his horror he then saw that it was a dark night and a blinding snow-storm was prevailing. All the more reason for losing no time, however. So now he called in the services of John, the man-of-all-work, sometimes engaged for a week or two at special seasons, provisionally being Christmas week, and provided with lanterns, started out in pursuit of the poor little fugitive. They went as fast as they could walk, and that seemed to be a snail's pace to the anxious husband, who groaned aloud on finding the walking so difficult and the storm so heavy; for if it was hard to them, what must it be to that delicate, wayward, heart-sore little woman?

On, on they stumbled, blinded by the snow, pierced by the icy wind, and, even with lanterns to guide them, losing their way, and finding it again with difficulty, till, at length, in the distance, they could see the light in the front windows of the house of May's mother. Linley seldom spoke, but groans of despair broke every few minutes from his lips.

"Oh, pray Heaven! she has reached there in safety!" he ejaculated, as he neared the lights that gleamed forth from Mrs. Baker's cottage.

"Poor foolish child, perhaps she started before the storm began," and then he stumbled over a great pile of snow, fell sprawling among it, and found himself clutching a dripping wet mass of clothes.

With a cry of dismay and fear he picked it up, and saw it was May, unconscious, cold—perhaps dead!

Linley Crawford was a strong man, and May was but a child in his arms, but for a moment, in that awful recognition of her, his strength became as an infant's, and he fell on his knees, while his slight burden slipped from his grasp and lay on the cruel snow again.

But only for a moment—the next his sinews were as iron; he raised May in his arms as if she had been but a feather, and, praying audibly while he ran, he almost flew with her to her mother's home.

But May was not dead, although very nearly; and after much nursing and coddling, and restoratives, she was able, with the dawn of Christmas Day, to put her arms about her husband's neck, to beg his forgiveness, and to whisper in his ear:

"Then you do love me, Linley, after all!"

"Oh, May, will you ever doubt it again?"

"No, dear Linley, I think not. Jealousy is a consuming fire, but after last night I do think it will be pretty well frozen out of me—if you will only forgive me."

Linley did forgive her, for love forgives much; and May was even more ashamed than he cared to see her when, in receiving her lovely Christmas gifts, she learned why her husband spent so much of that day in Mrs. Rockford's company.

But it was a wholesome lesson and May declares that though not their first quarrel, it will assuredly be their last. And up to this time she has kept her word.

PICCADILLY.

The origin of the street named Piccadilly has been hotly debated. A plausible theory has been offered—that one Higgins, a haberdasher, had invented a spiked ruff, suggesting the "piccadilly, or lance, and out of this made a fortune, which he invested in houses along the famous thoroughfare, then a rural lane.

HOME CHRISTMAS TREES.

Why is it that more farmers do not have Christmas trees for their children, at least while they are small? "Santa Claus" is one of the brightest periods in the child's life to look back to and it would be but very little more work on father's and mother's part to have a Christmas tree. Of course we intend to give the little ones something but you say, "it saves so much bother, and we can just as well put the presents in their stockings."

I don't believe we as farmers half appreciate our chances to have a fine Christmas tree as we should. Think what prices our city cousins have to pay for their holiday evergreens, and all we have to do is to choose our tree and cut it! But they have their evergreens, just the same, and we seldom do. You think that you have not enough presents to fill a Christmas tree. Well then, don't get a very large tree, but be sure and get a pretty shaped one, and a few presents, properly arranged, will show off much more than you would imagine.

Now for the trimming. Make sacks for the candy, nuts and popcorn, of mosquito-netting, in various shapes, such as shoes, stockings, hearts, etc.; then some popcorn balls with a string to tie them on by, some oranges, bananas, and as much candy as you can afford for them, and "last but not least" some of your finest apples, (red, yellow and green), polished till they shine and tied among the hemlock branches, produce a very pretty effect. Instead of tying up the presents in paper, leave them undone on the tree, in sight, for all to admire.

Let the most artistic one in the family arrange the tree. Do not let the little ones see it till it is all arranged; they will enjoy it much more than to see it beforehand. Even if Santa does not come down the chimney, let him at least be heard outside the door with his sleighbells, making his yearly trip to the good boys and girls. Let the children know there is to be a Christmas tree, and so how they will enjoy planning for it. Give the children a "merry Christmas" this year at home.—Annie Wilcox.

LISTEN TO THE ANGELS.

Listen, listen to the angels, through the midnight calm and clear, Singing again their sweet, sweet song, so old, yet ever so dear; With voices tuned divinely, telling the wondrous story Of the Virgin Mother mild, and her babe, the King of glory.

Listen, listen to the angels, as that blessed night of old They filled the air with harmony from heavenly harps of gold; As to the watching shepherds they brought the tidings holy; "Christ is born in Bethlehem and lies in a manger lowly!"

Listen, listen to the angels singing sweetly once again; "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men!" O, heavenly choir, time sings for aye Your song which is ushered in The coming of Christ, the Savior, to redeem the world from sin!

MISTLETOE.

When on the chandelier I saw The mistletoe and holly, The one conclusion I could draw Led me straight on to folly.

For Margery, with cheeks aglow And lips, each one a berry, Was smiling at the mistletoe A smile peculiar, very!

I watched them both, and when above Her head the green leaves fluttered, I caught and kissed the girl I love And something tender uttered.

She blushed, of course; the deed was done. Quoth she: "Since kissing's pleasant I'll give you just another one, To be your Christmas present."

Good lovers all, take note of this, The Christmas prank of Cupid, A spray of mistletoe amiss Were nothing short of stupid.

—Felix Carmen.

CHRISTMAS ON SUNDAY.

It is considered particularly lucky when Christmas falls on Sunday and the reverse when it comes on Saturday. The intermediate days are, for the most part, propitious. It is also often quoted that if the sun shines bright at noon on Christmas, there will be a good crop of apples the following Autumn.

HOLIDAY PARTIES.

Inexpensive Table Decorations for Children's Entertainments.

The following suggestions for a children's party may be adapted to holiday festivities.

At a children's party, a good way to designate the places of the little folks at table is to take a good sized sugar cookie, cover the top with a thin icing, either white or chocolate, and with a pastry bag and tube write out with icing, in a contrasting color, the given name or initials of each child. A brush dipped in chocolate may take the place of the tube. The children always find it rare fun to hunt up their places by this dainty device.

Decorate the table prettily using plenty of flowers, and garnishing every dish tastefully with parsley or other greens used especially for that purpose.

A unique arrangement for holding salt or bonbons may be made easily, and will add much to the appearance of the table. Take egg-shells, broken in two, with the edges as smooth as possible, and glue the bottom of each to a circular piece of cardboard about the size of a quarter dollar. Be sure that the shells are carefully cleaned and the edges gilded if liked, although, if made tolerably even, the gilding may be omitted.

Cut leaves from tissue or crepe paper of varying tints of pink, and a few a tender green. Curl the edges like the petals of a rose, then glue the base of the egg shell in such a way that the pinkest petals come nearest the shell, curling up around it, while the paler deck the outside, and the green leaves conceal the base. Shades of yellow can be used with good effect and the little shell will look as if seated in the heart of a great chrysanthemum. After a little practice, these dainty notions can be made easily and quickly, and are a great addition to the appearance of the table.

The birthday cake is naturally the most important feature of the occasion, and should always be honored with a conspicuous place on the table. Round loaf admits of the most elaborate decoration, and should be iced in any pattern desired, and garnished with flowers. Colored tapers in tin standards may be grouped about the cake, fastened to circular pieces of cardboard, which should be covered with a dainty napkin or fringed tissue paper. The candles should correspond in number to the child's years.

In addition to the other ornaments, the date of the birth and of the present anniversary may be traced in the centre of the cake, either in colored frosting or in candies.

A CHRISTMAS MEDITATION.

Christmas becomes everyone's day. Childhood can have no monopoly of it, though His child life inspires it. Christians are not its sole possessors while they are its only true interpreters. Youth can not claim the whole of it, even while its exuberance gives it its chief natural emphasis. There are currents beneath the surface motion into which the plummet meditation must plunge, to note their existence and determine their direction.

To the old it is a day of reminiscence, of comparison, of the resurrection of loves and joys, buried under the slowly thickening mold of the years. To them and to the middle aged it brings surprises in the marks of change in mind, body custom and place. Even as I write these words memory resurrects a toyless morning, an undecorated church, a conscientious secularizing of the day by a stern but holy Puritan, who yielded to the Advent geniality only in a more bountiful provision for the table. Faces that we have loved and lost awhile reappear in the magic photographs of undying affection. Voices of sweetness and strength made vibrant by my sorrows and my unsubdued longings, whisper and cry to me from the summoned past. Ideals once dominant, now but the sad-faced ghosts of failure, float up to measure their littleness, and alas! it may be their stalwartness, by present attainment. Nothing, perhaps, so much marks the changes as the strength of the events now needed to awaken the exhilaration or surprise. It is pathetic to see how little it takes to startle the youth or the maid into ecstasy, how much less the boy and girl.

But it is just here that the Christ Child does one of his noblest works in becoming the bond of sympathy between the young and the mature. Mothers taught by the Virgin mother ponder these things in their hearts more than men. That He who was the Word and therefore the expression of the divine thought of mercy and redemption humbled himself to our low estate, smiled from his wide-open eyes upon the gifts of the Wise Men and on those who brought them; these are the tender yet mighty guaranties of the value of childhood in all Christian homes. As love watches the unfolding of mind and heart, youth takes on dignity by the questions He asked the doctors of the temple, and young manhood has an added grace through the record of his toiling with Joseph and his emergence and triumph through the attest of the Heavenly Dove. The young in our homes do not know the depth and interest and the purity of affection which they are enriched, because He was born. Through love's joys and pains they must come to this knowledge, and its refining discipline can never reach them until the lower love has taken on spiritual illumination and beauty through his transforming touch.—Bishop D. Goodsell.

Chicken Pie.—Cut a fat hen up and stew till you can pick the meat from the bones with a fork, remove the chicken, make a rich gravy in the pot. Have a crust in the bakepan made of one pint of flour, one-half teaspoonful of salt, one teaspoonful of baking powder, two good tablespoonfuls of lard, water to form a dough. Fill the pie with a layer of chicken, a layer of sliced hard-boiled eggs, till all is in, usually four eggs to a chicken, then pour the gravy over, cover with a top crust and bake to a nice brown. Veal pie made in the same way is very fine or if your chicken is not large, use veal with it; stew them together, and few can tell that it is not all chicken.



SANTA AND THE STOCKINGS.