

ness letter (which was actually true) which required her to go home immediately, and though her aunt begged her to return for the holidays, she made no promise, for she was heartily tired of the frivolity of fashionable life.

Rachel was set down at Squire Fleming's gate one cold day early in December, and walking up to the front door lifted the heavy knocker herself; the Squire answered the door, and, almost too astonished to speak, called to his wife. "Rachel has come," after the first greetings; Mrs. Fleming said, "Of course you're come for Christmas, its only a few days off." Rachel looked serious and replied, "That depends upon the advice I get from you two people on a very important matter," and then she opened her heart freely to these good friends, though very much embarrassed in giving the details. Mrs. Fleming shed a few tears, for she had hoped "Collins, who was soon to have his diploma would take to Rachel," as she expressed it; but the girl smiled and said "if she must marry, it would be a man, and not a boy, even if he were a doctor," and besides she added, "Do you remember telling me last Christmas the old saying, 'There's as good fish in the sea as ever were caught,' and Dr. Collins will undoubtedly have a good show." The Squire laughed but his wife didn't even smile, she felt it was too bad not to have Rachel in the family, yet in her heart she knew it was best (as her husband decided after hearing the girl's story and her grandma's counsel) that she should marry the minister, and urged her to be married on Xmas day.

Squire Fleming paid the minister a visit that evening; he had just come from the postoffice, feeling a little despondent finding no letter from Rachel in answer to his, but when the maid opened the door of his study and announced "Squire Fleming," he tried to seem unconcerned. The Squire was not long in stating his errand, and Mr. Gillman's joy was beyond expression in words. It would be too much to tell of the meeting of these young people in the "best room" at the mansion; the wax candles were not lighted, and there were no pine knots blazing, only a few coals from the fire that had been lighted when Rachel came, but it was quite sufficient for their interview, and if Grandma Hilton had been watching she would have seen the minister making love to Rachel in the most impassioned way.

Rachel had seen so much style in costumes at her aunt's, that she went to the other extreme and would not even have a wedding dress at all, and argued with Mrs. Fleming, who tried to insist upon it, saying, "I'm in mourning for my grandma and it would be in very bad taste, besides as the minister's wife I must be very circumspect," and she had her own way. Mr. Gillman and Miss Van Dyke were married quietly on Christmas eve in the dear old parlor, sacred to many memories of the days that were past; and Harry's picture on the wall didn't seem to frown upon her, nor affect her in any way. Dr. Collins was at home and was best man at the ceremony, and Eunice and Abbie were perfectly delighted to be bridesmaids, and Squire Fleming gave the bride away, though Rachel wanted him to perform the ceremony, but Mr. Gillman was rather doubtful about its being strictly

orthodox, unless a minister officiated and so went away some distance to one of his college friends, and everything was perfectly satisfactory. After the ceremony and congratulations, when all were seated at the table in the same living room where, years ago, Rachel had heard the news of Harry's marriage, the Squire brought in letters, Dick had driven over to town to fetch them. Mrs. Fleming trembled when she saw the foreign post-mark, but the Squire did not heed her nods, and opened it forthwith. "Good news, my friends," he exclaimed "Harry's wife has borne a son, and now let us drink to the health and happiness of the bride and bridegroom, and the little grandson across the sea." Never did there seem a happier company, even Mrs. Fleming appeared jubilant over the news of Harry's boy. The evening was spent in songs, music and tales of the mansion, and of the many marriages the Squire had solemnized, and his father before him, in that same room. Xmas day passed joyfully the Rev. Nat. Brown preached the sermon, while the bridegroom sat in the high backed pew with his bride beside him.

At evening one year from the first time the minister had escorted Rachel home, he took her to his home, the parsonage, instead of her grandma's. Rachel recalled it all and told him how she had felt that night, for she resolved there should be no secrets in her life, her husband should not know.

And as I am very much interested in these people who lived "long ago," perhaps I ought to tell you a little more, not exactly that they all married and lived happily forever afterwards like the people in fairy stories, but that many very strange things happened, for as you know wonderful things sometimes occur in the lives of men and women.

Rachel was a model minister's wife and the mother of five daughters. You would not care to hear of them, as they never married, but were all lovely women spinsters. Harry Fleming's wife died in Paris and he brought his boy home to his mother to raise, while he studied art abroad. Dr. Collins was a successful physician, and after the death of his father and mother he kept house at the mansion with his sister Eunice. Abbie married and went to Utica to live, and when Harry tired of living abroad he came home too to be with his son, and the family, for like many another wanderer in foreign parts he longed for the old home, and the familiar friends and places. Mrs. Gillman and her daughters visited occasionally at the mansion, and after the girls were grown and the Rev. Erastus Gillman had been laid away some time in the silent grave in the old churchyard, where so many dear ones Rachel had tenderly loved were sleeping—the love she had once erased came to her. Harry Fleming, resting upon his laurels and his well-merited fame, found passing his time at Mrs. Gillman's home very pleasant, and the girls totally unaware of any love passages of the past their mother's life contained imagined his visits were intended for one of them. What was their great surprise to hear from Dr. Collins that he was their mother's first sweetheart; they were romantic girls and teased their mother unmercifully about her old beau, but she took the matter very seriously and called a family council and laid the subject before them, whereupon they all

decided in favor of Mr. Fleming; and after seven years of widowhood, and when her hair had begun to turn gray, and her manner was very sedate and reposeful, there was another wedding in the same old parlor in the mansion—not of a young and blooming bride, nor an ardent young lover, but a man in years, who had seen much of the world and and was glad to find rest and happiness in the love of a true woman, and so, though Mrs. Fleming was not there to see it, Rachel came at last, after long years, to be mistress of the old mansion, and the home was full too with Rachel's children, and the Flemings, and in good time still another was added to the family—a son was born to Rachel and Harry Fleming, and their was greater rejoicing there on that Xmas day when the news of the grandson was brought from afar while the company sat at the marriage feast of Mr. and Mrs. Gillman. How often it has come to pass, that the things one longed for unreasonably when young, are given in the soberer years or even in the sere and yellow leaf of age. But the best of all this history remains to be told, and as this story is already too long, you who are fond of old fashioned love stories, must wait patiently, until next Christmas, for the finale. W. W. W.

SANTA CLAUS.

[For the News by Janette Carrington.]

'Tis said to be twelve hundred years and some
more
Since an ardent old pilgrim on Alta's bright
shore
Was begging for shelter on Christmas Eve—
A boon that he never had failed to receive.
You can sleep in the castle, the peasants re-
plied.
And get such a handsome reward beside

On arising domain at the end of the tale
Stood the gorgeous Castle of Harleyberrie.
Discreed by mortals untenanted there
On account of the furies that haunted the air,
And all of the folks at the village could tell—
How the mansion was troubled from garret to
cell.
And rumished around with a noise and a light
That no one could live in the house over
night.

'Twas furnished and garnished in beautiful
style.
As the Grecian Castle of Harleyberrie,
All the tiers and the pillars so rare to behold
Were burnished and fettered with silver and
gold,
And appeared to the preacher so grand and
sublime.

It was as a temple from Solomon's time
Erected for worship a sacred abode,
That once had been filed with the glory of
God;

A house with its columns of marble and gilt
That a monarch commanding his millions had
built.

So rewards were put out at a hundred and five
To the man who'd sleep there and come out
alive!

But no one to venture their life could be found
Who lived on the shore or the village round,
As the sprites had them all such in terrible
dread

Till the saintly old pilgrim had sought for a
bed.

I shall go, he replied, with the help of the
Lord.

And the poor of the village shall have the re-
ward

With the blessing of God I have nothing to
fear,
As his faithful old servant for many a year;
And accepting the key he wended his way
So fearless and brave, so feeble and gray.

He walked to the portal and opened the door
Then shut it again, stepping in on the floor.
The idea, said he, what is there to scare?
And catching the hannister mounted the stair,
On reaching the top such a sight he beheld,
The statues and sculpture could not be ex-
celled;

In pure alabaster the urns and the vases
Protruded from under the roses and daisies.
The choicest of flowers with their trellises
fell