

the reader with a recital of Wintermute's proposal to become the husband of Mary Garland, when once she was free. His absurd harangue was concluded by the statement that he and Mrs. Becky would call in a carriage for Mrs. Garland and the children on Christmas day, and they would all dine together at castle Wintermute. And then Wintermute bowed himself out, leaving his hostess in what is generally termed "a state of mind."

Right here, let us do an act of justice to Mrs. Becky. She was no fool. She had seen enough to know that the idea of divorce was as foreign to the mind of Mary Garland as the possibility that she could, or would, become Wintermute's wife under any circumstances. But she had determined to wound this tender, faithful, devoted woman, and when Obed Wintermute, drunk with his idle hopes, returned home that day and recounted his adventures, she felt that nothing was lacking but the Christmas day ride to the house where her pet aversion lived, and the sight of her face, suffused with shame and sorrow, to fill the cup of her revenge. Thus matters stood at Wintermute's three days before Christmas. The poor old man badgered the housekeeper, the cook and the serving maid, on the subject of the Christmas dinner, until a revolt seemed imminent in the household, and was, probably, only averted by shrewd Mrs. Becky mixing both the first and second toddies of that memorable day a trifle stronger than usual.

I return, for a moment, to the station where Garland and his faithful partner were awaiting the train which would bear them home. The latter, pursuant to Garland's instructions, had written to Jabez Long, advising him that they proposed to arrive at home about 10 p. m. on Christmas eve, and requesting him to notify Mrs. Garland of the fact, and, if possible, keep the matter a profound secret from all others, even from Gracie. But little remains to be told. Jabez received the good tidings on the morning of the 24th of December. An hour after its receipt, he walked over to Mrs. Garland's cottage, and, finding a convenient moment, when the children were busy with preparations for their Christmas tree, slipped the precious missive into Mrs. Garland's hands. One glance revealed its contents to the now happy wife, and the look of joy and gratitude which she turned upon her faithful old friend, repaid him a thousand times for all that he had ever been able to do for Garland and his family. With rare self-control, the faithful wife and mother wore through the day without a hint to the children of what was in

store for them in the morning. Gracie wondered if, after all, Santa Claus would not bring back to her, her own dear papa, and her last act before wandering off to dreamland, was to hang a childish offering on the family tree for dear papa.

Christmas morning in the year of Grace, 1885! Seated by the fireplace in the Garlands' temporary home, a pale, but happy, man held his wife's hands, and awaited the moment when, awaking from the deep sleep of childhood, a girl and a boy would come romping in to see what Santa Claus had brought them. There was not much delay. An opened door, a moment's pause in wide-eyed and delighted wonderment, a shout of childish joy, a shower of kisses and a tempest of caresses, and father, mother and children were together once more. "And did you find the 'Home Again Ledge,' dear papa?" was almost the first question Gracie asked after the kisses and caresses of the first moments of meeting. We, the writer and the readers of this narrative, have but little to do with the sacred confidences which were exchanged by husband and wife on that bright morning, but there was a comedy about 11 a. m. that day, which was worth looking at.

Pursuant to appointment, Garland's partner came over to the house about nine o'clock Christmas morning, and, an hour later, Jabez Long and his wife called in, bringing a basketful of "additions" to the Christmas dinner to be eaten in Garland's house that day. About 11 a. m., Gracie, who was looking out of the window, informed the party that a carriage had stopped at the gate. It was an open barouche. On the back seat, sat Mrs. Becky Scrimgeour, gotten up, evidently, without regard to expense. There was something truly wonderful in the hat she wore, and as for the flamboyant colors of her cloak, they challenged rivalry. On the front seat, Wintermute, glossier, if possible, as to broadcloth and hat, and more dazzling as to watch and chain and the gold headed knob of his walking stick, than ever before, sat smirking like a pinchback satyr. Before he could pick himself up, as it were, and leave his seat in order to come and offer to escort his proposed guests to the carriage, the door of the cottage opened and Garland's partner stepped out. The following tableau was then performed: Geoffrey and Mary Garland stood on the lower step, Gracie's hand in her father's and Harry's in his mother's. Behind these, stood old Jabez Long and his wife, and it is said that although it was Christmas day, and her heart was over-