It was Christmas eve: that joyous season when the hearts of all are touched by a softening influence, and the fragrant blossoms of love and good will spring in more abundant luxuriance. In every home preparations were being made for the great Christian Festival which the morrow was to celebrate. Many were the fair fingers deftly eng ged in weaving graceful devices for the adornment of home, and many a j yous Christmas song rang forth from ight and youthful hearts.

in one of the spacious reception rooms of Morton Hall were two young and lovely girls surrounded by holly, evergreen, and flowers, of which they were forming bright and elegant decorations. These were Gertrude, the only laughter of Squire Morton, and her the long windows, and played upon our vows. their fair features, a more charming youth is indeed beautiful, in its early sweetness, when no cloud of sorrow prow of the vessel which is bearing the ruby lips under the mistletoe bough. youthful voyager onward.

"How lovely the room will look when it is quite completed, dear Gertrade!" exclamed her cousin. "These are others waiting which are to occupy positions that we cannot reach. I thought you told me Edward Fenton was coming to assist you in the arrange-

"I do not doubt but that he will be here soon," rejoined Gertrude, as a soon the period arrived for Edward reassure you. Thus you see, Gertrude," soft blush, which she in vain strove to | Fenton to proceed to London. conceal, played upon her fair face. "Besides, the time appointed has scarcely arrived."

you knew that I had divined a secret?" affectionately around her cousin's neck. 'and that it concerns two persons?"

"I must first be convinced that you possess the power of divination before and to whisper, "Forget me not!" comment upon its particular exercise,' replied Gertrude.

"Your remark is evidently meant as a satire upon my poor capacity, as if it were too shallow to grasp anything so profound as a secret," retorted Clare, laughingly. "But I will put another construction upon your words, and re- life itself would soon arrive. gard them as a challenge to prove my 'power of divination" by declaring what it is I have discovered."

as her cheek grew yet more crimson. positively read my thoughts, and thus save me the trouble of shaping them dear cousin," she proceeded, affecworthy of your affection than he, who, measure. But there goes the hall-bell; were last year. It is nearly time for claims Mr. Fenton's arrival, I will with- him alone." draw, and give him an opportunity to breathe those tender things which are

she spoke, and it was in vain that her a thing for the presence of a third per- Photographing and Picture

cousin called to her to return. Left alone, the fair Gertrude became Clare's assurance that Edward Fenton her mind. reciprocated her attachment lingered in At length she became conscious that

tender light in his dark eyes, and an entered the room, her eye sought his expression of true manliness upon his with that look of tender coyness which December afternoon.

must trouble the reader with a word or sank upon a seat. two of explanation. Edward's father' "What is the matter, Edward?" she Dr. Fenton, and Squire Morton had gasped. "You bring no Christman been near neighbours for many years, | gladness with you. Why did you come and a close friendship existed between to cast a shadow over my heart?" them. Thus it was that, in her early "Gertrude!" he rejoined, and his years, Gertrude Morton had been inti- voice was hard and constrained, "you mately associated with Edward Fenton, remember last Christmas-eve? Then although the latter was some years her | we were happy; but the dream was too

young friends left their native village-- rience, that it was not the fairest that Gertrude repairing to a fashionable should greet my eyes. I need not speak ladies' seminary, in an adjoining town, further. Gertrude, I come now to reand Edward to Eton, and thence to lease you from your vows!" fession) had been left a widower, and being childless, he had entreated that "Edward, at this happy yet holy

year with him.

Gertrude with unaffected admiration, of Edward Fenton." as she viewed the scene before her. as he stood beside the lovely girl, "It burying her face in her hands, she is a charming seene. The blossoms sobbed aloud. which you have intertwined with those When she at length raised her eyes sober evergreens are emblems of the she found that Edward Fenton had left many graces of your own heart! They her, but, advancing towards her, she shine forth brightly, and gladden all beheld her cousin, Clare Winton.

around! Ah! Gertrude," he continued "Oh, Clare, Clare!" she cried, in a

heart. Am I too presumptuous in cousin, "I know all, and I am come to hoping that you return my affection?" render to you the balm of woe. There As Edward spoke he took the young is in reality no cause for the tears you

a tiny curl from your golden locks? I Fenton; and one day, as I told you my bosom. Let it plead for me now!" When we were speaking of you, Edward

hope and joy.

sight could scarcely be conceived. Yes, silence Gertrude suffered the young your own feelings, I rejoined; 'but I has rested upon the heart, and when the purity of the kiss which Edward ton's heart is yours, and yours only." the light of hope shines full upon the Fenton pressed upon the young girl's

The young man lost no time in ac- to it, that Edward had relinquished the quainting Squire Morton with the mu- idea. tual attachment which subsisted between himself and Gertrude. Greatgarlands which we have already hung was Mr. Morton's joy on hearing that (where he knew I should be spending a e exceedingly effective. But here the son of his old friend had anticicorded.

Very tender was the parting between oore with him the measure of his be-"Gertrude, what should you say if loved one's taper tinger, that he might you knew that I had divined a secret?" procure an engagement-ring in town, cried Clare, as she passed her arm and send it to her. This he did withto have borrowed the lips of Edward, leave you, and send Edward, that he

> once more a glory that was born of the room. Heavers rested upon the earth.

ful garlands for Christmas decoration. mighty gladness as now, when I know "No-no! Spare me!" cried Gertrude, Again the setting sun lit up their that I do indeed possess the priceless youthful features, and the face of Ger- treasure of your affection. Ah! dearest, "Why, you little witch!" said Clare. | trude Morton looked even more lovely | can you forgive the pain which I have 'Talk about "divination," you seem than on the previous Christmas-eve, for caused you! If so, suffer me to place gifted with the knowledge of that there was in her violet orbs that ten- this ring once more upon your finger, particular science yourself, much as der and holy light which the knowledge and let us renew our vows in the same you deride its possession by another in a very remarkable degree! You can ward Fenton was fully returned by its Christmas-Eve. inspirer had enkindled.

upen their being hung by your dear her "Under the Mistletoe-bough!" I am well assured, returns it in equal Edward in the same positions as they and as I have little doubt that it pro- his arrival; I shall leave you to receive

This time Gertrude did not attempt to recall her cousin as she had done a The light-hearted girl vanished as Fenton would to-day be far too sacred

Left alone, the fair Gertrude became conscious, in the brief interval that elapsed before her visitor was announced, of an indefinable feeling of joy as For some time Gertrude sat in a

her ears. She knew that her own the time had come for her lover's arrival, heart was unopened to all but him, and and as she heard the hall-bell vibrate the thought that she held the key to with his well-remembered impetuous his affections was inexpressibly sweet. ring, she stood in eager, yet bashful Tall and strikingly handsome, with a impatience to receive him; and when he noble features, Edward Fenton looked, is so natural to youth. But soon she indeed, worthy of the love of a pure | withdrew her gaze in fearful amazement, and lovely girl, such as Gertrude Mor- for there was no answering smile on ton, as he entered the apariment in Edward Fenton's face. The tone in which the latter was seated on that which he addressed her was so strangely cold, that her limbs trembled violent-And now, as briefly as may be, we ly, and, unable to suport herself, she

bright to last. Then I gathered a loveenior.

As time passed, however, and the ly human flower, only to find, by expe-

Oxford—they met but seldom. The The young girl did not faint, though education of both was now completed how she managed to retain consciousyet separation was again at hand. An ness was a mystery which she herself only brother of Dr. Fenton's, residing was never able to explain. She rose in NOTARY PUBLIC, ETC., ETC. in London (himself in the medical pro- simple dignity, and grasping a chair for

Edward, upon the conclusion of his season, when earth seems linked with college career, might spend at least a heaven, I would not that any mean pear with him.

Dr. Fenton had willingly persuaded guage, leading me to affect an indiffer
Oprice—Over Mr. John Brandon's Store, Entrangement of the control of the contr Edward to embrace his uncle's offer, ence which I do not feel. No; though for, apart from his own desire to minis- your words imply that you have trans- Newcastle, Miramichi, N. B. ter comfort to his bereaved brother, he ferred your affections to one whom you well knew the professional advantages have found more worthy of your regard, which the young man would secure, the | you are still to me the brightest, the latter having long since resolved to de- only star of life; and I would not have vote himself to the science of medicine. you bound by your vows to me for one And now, to return to the drawing- moment longer. Take this engageroom of Squire Morton's mansion. Ed- ment-ring," she proceeded, as she drew ward's willing fingers soon adjusted it from her finger, "and when you the fair Christmas decorations which place it upon the hand of another, rehad been waiting for his disposal upon member that you are still followed by the walls of the spacious apartment. the prayers of Gertrude Morton, who "How beautiful it looks!" exclaimed | will devote a solitary life to the memory

She ceased, overcome by the emotion "Yes Gertrude," rejoined Edward, which she could no longer suppress, and

"surely there could be no more fitting fresh paroxysm of grief, "you will season than the present, when I shall never guess the bitter sorrow which has so soon be parted from you, to speak to sillen upon my heart!" ...

you of the deep love which fills my "Dearest Gertrude," rejoined her

girl's hand, and finding that she did are now shedding, as you will soon not withdraw it, he proceeded thus: know. Calm yourself, and I will ex-"Do you remember, Gertrude. that plain. About a month since, as you happy Christmastide, now two years will remember, I visited London with since, when, in idle play, you severed my father. There we met with Edward remember how you laughed when I afterwards, he and I took a long walk said I should always prize it. See together. I related to you the chief (and he produced it from an inner part of our conversation, but there was pocket), I have worn it ever since in one portion to which I did not refer-

There was a softened light in Ger- said how dearly he loved you, and that trude's eye, which trembled with some- his love grew stronger every day. thing very like a tear, as Edward ceased 'But, Clare,' said he, and his voice trembled with intensity of feeling, "do He saw it, and his heart leaped with | you think I am all in all to her? She is so young, so beautiful, and so much "Gertrude," he cried, "see how admired, that I fear at times lest some beautifully the white berries of the mis- change should have passed over the tletoe-bough are glistening this after- first enthusiasm of her love for me, and noon! If you do not spurn my suit, that she may have seen one among her cousin, Clare Winton. As the setting suffer me to lead you beneath it, and many suitors whom she would prefer to beams of the winter sun glanced through with one pure kiss of love we will seal myself. I often think I should like to test her affection.

And so it was. In the consent of "In that you must be guided by man to read her heart, and angels am certain that, whatever test you may might have bent from Heaven to mark apply, you will find that Gertrude Mor-"The subject then dropped, and I concluded, as I heard no more relating

"This morning, however, I received a letter from him, addressed to me here my Christmastide), informing me of the pated what had long been the most test which he intended to apply, and cherished desire of his own heart, and requesting me to station myself in the warm was the consent which he ac- vicinity of this apartment, so that, should he find you did, indeed, still love That happy C ristmastide sped all him, he might, on quitting it himself, too quickly for the affianced lovers, and give the signal for me to enter and continued Clare, playfully, "my powers of divination, which you sought to imhim and Gertrude, and the young man pugn last Christmas-Eve, are proved to penetrate the most carefully-guarded out delay, and, as Gertrude looked would but manifest the strength of your upon it, the sparkling sapphires seemed attachment. And now, dearest, I will

may plead for your forgiveness.' Christmas-eve had come again, and Fenton immediately afterwards entered

"Gertrude," he exclaimed, "it was a In Morton Hall there was one young cruel test, but infinitely more trying to heart beating with glad expectancy, for me to apply than for you to endure. one dearer to Gertrude Morton than knew, however, that if I acted thus I should soon learn from your manner Once more the two fair cousins were whether you did indeed love me. busily engaged intertwining the grace- Never did my heart beat with such

And with a heart in which sorrow "Now our task is completed, dear was turned to joy, and cloud to suninto words! But suffer me to say, my Gertrude," exclaimed Clare Winton, at shine, Gertrude Morton suffered Edward length. "We will leave these garlands, Fenton to adorn her hand once more tionately, "that I know no one more for I know that you have set your heart with the engagement-ring, and to lead

Dissolution.

unutterable in the presence of strang. year ago. No; she felt that the first MERSEREAU & THOMSON meeting between her and Edward has been dissolved this day by mutual consent and the business of

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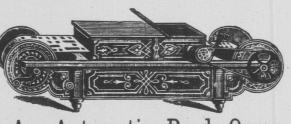
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