

rushed to congratulate Septimus, who remained dignified and proudly happy. The next day and during the following week it was one prolonged reception on the part of Mrs. Smith, for all the wives of the invited creditors called to congratulate her on her good fortune and assure her that only domestic duties and not want of friendship had prevented them from paying their respects to her before. Each one told her how highly they had thought of Mr. Smith; some adding that they always knew he was considerably below his position, as anyone could see how superior he was; a few asked if there was any title with the estate, to which Mrs. Smith replied with a modest evasion that almost at once made her a duchess; whilst others hinted that they had been the quiet means of preventing their partners from pressing her husband to pay their accounts, as they always knew his word was as good as gold. But all accepted the Christmas invitation and offered all assistance to Mrs. Smith in the huge undertaking. So the time went on till the week before Christmas, and all Pokerville raged with excitement at the great social event. During this week Septimus Smith gave large orders to all his old creditors, and unlimited supplies of every possible kind were sent. He declined to deal with any one else, he said, as they had trusted him so long and faithfully and he could not forget their kindness. Mrs. Smith received lists of guests from each family, and the total number reached to nearly 150 persons, old and young. The dinner took place at four o'clock in the afternoon, and was really a magnificent gathering. The various mothers vied with each other in the dresses of their families, and the town hall was splendidly decorated. At the dinner itself the tradesmen ate their own provisions and passed complimentary remarks on each other's supplies. Mr. Smith was especially loud in his praises of everything, and general happiness increased as the evening wore on. A cheque on a London bank, signed by the lawyer on behalf of the "Sir Theophilus Smith Estate," was found by each creditor under his plate on sitting down, for a round amount covering his account, with interest as promised. Later on, dancing and round games, card tables and music amused both young and old until long after midnight had passed, and at last group by group the hall was deserted and the Smith family alone remained. The Smith family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Septimus Smith only, and during the evening they had both expressed their envy of the possession of such fine families as they had entertained. Mr. and Mrs. Smith went home, apparently satisfied with their great Christmas party, and the town hall looked a picture of dissipated ruin. The next day the tired creditors called upon their host of the previous evening; but his house was not open. They did not disturb him, thinking after all the worry and excitement the lucky and benevolent couple desired and deserved a good rest. But the house was still shut up at night, and when at a very late hour two of the creditors climbed the back-garden fence and entered the kitchen, they were astounded to find painted in large capital letters on the entire side of one wall the following reminiscence of Mr. and Mrs. Smith:—

"Left for New York on the four o'clock train. Good-bye, sweethearts; good-bye! — Septimus and Sarah Smith."

The house was empty, and nothing but the unpaid for furniture remained. Mrs. Smith had taken all the unpaid for jewellery with her.

And then the twelve creditors again assembled and anathemized Mr. Septimus and Mrs. Sarah Smith in unmeasured terms as they realized they had been swindled not only out of their two-year-old accounts, but also out of the very wines and foods and Christmas presents they had all enjoyed on the previous evening at their own expense. All efforts failed to trace the authors of this exceptionally original Xmas party.



#### THOUGHT-READING.

ALONG the street this summer day  
She trips upon her graceful way  
A vision of delight;  
With garments of brocaded stuff,  
Trimmed round with fur to match her muf;  
And smiling features bright.

That's all the passer by can know  
The soul, the mind, the heart below,  
At these he can but guess;  
Yet it were safe to bet a cow  
That this fair lady's mind just now  
Is fastened on her dress!

THE Nashville preacher says dancing is not the proper caper.—*New Orleans Picayune.*