## A Story of Two

## Christmases.

There was a dull grey sky overhead, stretching gloomily across the calm waters of the St. Clair river. Its bank in this particular part of which I write, was a long stretch of lowlying land with few trees shading the smooth, wide road. A short distance from the river, almost hidden among cluster of fine old trees at a turn f the road, the gables of a quaint old brown house are visible.

Winter has been late in donning her Winter has been late in donning her white, icy mantle this year, for though it is the day before Christmas the grass is unusually green and the breeze soft and balmy as it flutters around two children sitting quietly on a low, moss grown log on the river bank. The eldest, a girl about eight, is anxiously scanning the river, her lovely dark eyes filled with an eager expectancy which has flushed her deexpectancy which has flushed her de-licate young cheek.

"Oh! he is coming; there is dear father at last. I'm so tired watching for him; Aren't you, Reggie!" She for him, Aren't you reggier she turns to her companion, a bright boy of five, who is playing with the pebbles, seeing how far he can throw into the water and weefully coming short of the mark in his efforts.

"So is I; and I'm drefful hungry, too," he answers, starting up and wav-

ing his cap towards an approaching boat which has turned around the bend in the river near them, and is being quickly rowed towards the bank by its solitary occupant, who, resting a moment on his oars, returns his little son's salute. A few moments later and he has housed his boat and, laden

with sundry packages, joins the chil-dren who fondly greet him.

"Well, father, did you see Santa Claus at the viliage, and tell him to be sure and come down our chimney to night ?"

"Yes, my boy; he is coming, so you and Irene hang up the biggest stock-

"All right." Reggie's chubby face beams with satisfaction. "I love San-ta Claus. He's the bestest man in all "Oh, father!" exclaims Irene, point-

ing to the brown house at the turn in the road, 'Do you think our chim-ney will be wide enough to get his Reggie's face falls as he looks up

anxiously at his father, who though his coat is only a frieze one, and his soft felt hat has seen good service, no one can fail to notice his aristocratic bearing and the dark beauty of his refined face, as he smiles fondly at the hittle fellow, saying: "Then he will have to leave his sleigh at the top and slide down."

"Father," Irene quietly eneeps closer to his side. "Mother is ill again."
Her father starts perceptibly. A cold numbness steals about his heart, which almost ceases beating as he

'Aunty said she was delirious and not know what she was saying, and sent us out on the beach to watch

He answers not a word, but the palfor of death creeps over his handsome face as hecries out silently. Again! Again! God of Heaven, all hope has

Wonderingly the children try to keep up with their parent's hasty steps, who, apparently deaf, dumb, and blind to all, strides on. Reggie's stout little legs fail him at length, and he piteously entreats his sister to wait for him, as his eyec fill with tears at his father's strange conduct. Irene's cheek is flushed and her breath comes quickly. Very willingly she slackens her pace and takes him lovingly by the hand, and they watch their father as he goes through the evening shadows to his house.

Entering the front garden, he opens the hall door quietly. Tall, strong man as he is, has hand trembles as he does so. A door near him is open. Someone in the room is talking and singing in muttered, indistinct tones It is a woman's voice. As he hears it a look of bitter disgust comes into his white face, and he smothers a curse beneath his brown moustache "Guy; where is Guy! I want him. the cry comes in shrill tones.

He goes quickly through the hal

into the kitchen, anywhere away from the sound of that voice calling him. He comes face to face with a stout, elderly woman on whose usually cheery countenance a dejected ex-pression is settled. As she sees him she cries out sorrowfully, "Oh, Guy; it is again the old story with her!"

"How! Where did she get it ".
His voice is calm, but it is the call ness of despair. A sob escapes her as she meets the look of utter misery she meets the look of utter misery in his dark eyes, and mentally she exclaims: "Poor fellow!" God pity him!" as she answers:: "I can't tell. We have been alone since you left for the village. She went upstairs to straighten things in that closet which we have not used for some time. When she came down, to my horror, Guy, I saw she wasn't herself. As she was rather wild I sent the chil-dren out of the house. Did you meet

them?" she anxiously inquires.
"Yes, Ann; poor, unfortunate children. See to them, for I must be alone?" He turns to leave the apartment. She calls datreatingly after him, "If you'd only go to her, Guy; it might quiet her."

him, "If you'd only go to her, Guy; it might quiet her."
"No; I wish I might never look upon her face again," he bitterly exclaims, as he passes from the room, going quickly up stairs to a small apartment at the top of the house, bolting himself in. It is almost bare of furniture, gloomy and cold, but he does not heed it. Throwing himself on a seat, sobs, such as are only on a seat, sobs, such as are only wrung from strong men in the hour of unutterable anguish, burst from him. The evening shadows creep away and the moon is lighting up the little chamber, still he sits there si-lent, motionless, his bent head buried s cold hands, his thoughts busy with the past, his ruined life by one mad act of his, when, in early years, he had married the handsome, ignorant, low-born daughter of his father's butler. The opposition of his aristo-oratic relations availed nothing. He gave up all, home, wealth, and friends, to wed the village beauty, Lizzie Norto wed the village beauty, Lizzie Nor-ton. Nine years have passed since then, years during which he has re-gretted bitterly that fatal act, for as time went by he discovered that the girl, for whom he had sacrificed his life in his mad infatuation, proved not colk an ill-tempered isolons woman. only an ill-tempered, jealous woman, but was constantly giving way to the rists,

His watchful care and passionate appeals were in vain. Who can express the untold misery Be endured? He, with his proud, refined, sensitive nature. Separated from his family, who looked with contemptuous anger on his marriage, he resolved to go away and bury himself in some strange land from all who had ever known him. So he crossed the ocean with his unfor-tuinate wife, two little children and a widowed sister of his wife s, who in love and pity for her young sister and her helpless babies, accompanied them

to their distant home.

God, and his own heart, alone, knew God, and his own heart, alone, knew what Guy Nevile suffered in that loaely brown house near the river. Life at times would have been unbearable were it not for his children. His wife had returned from an inebriate asylum a few weeks before, repentant and resolved to amend her life. Sister and husband, trembling with hope guarded and sustained her life. Sister and husband trembling with hope, guarded and sustained her in this, the last chance for her redemption, but my story shows how fruitless their efforts to save her from the miserable, debasing habit, for she had come across, in that disused closet, some inebriating dram hidden away by herself and forogeten. Numb with cold and misery, Guy Neville at length arises wearily and goes to the window ofthe little room. The moonlit river stretches calmly before him, the glorious stars look peacefully out of a cloudless heaven from the various houses near and far along the river bank, lights gleam,

along the river bank, lights gleam, telling, perhaps, of mirth and gladness in happy homes on this bright Christ-

mas eve.
Over thousands of miles of land, across the wide ocean, his thoughts fly, before his mental vision a stately hall arises on which that same moon will shed her light and gleam here and there through fine old trees in the park around. One face and form of his boyhood he yearns for to-night, in his boyhood he yearns for to-night, in hopeless sorrow. Does she ever think of him, the son who nearly broke her proud heart, an outcast from all once 

shriek is heard from the lower rooms. He rushes quickly from the apartment, down the stairs, with an unde fined terror filling his breast. On the way Irene calls to him, "Oh! father,

what's the matter?"
She stands at the door of the children's bedchamber. A sweet picture in her white drapery, her small hands outstretched, her dark eyes full of alarmed entreaty. Only a glance can he give the lovely vision, as he hurriedly exclaims: "My darling, shut the door and go

to bed! She obeys, sobbing quietly, her young heart filled with dread as she

thinks: "Oh! the trouble has come to us again, and we thought mamma would be well now. When auntie sent us to bed she said we couldn't see our dear father! What will he do, and all

"Is it Christmas now, and Santa Claus come, Irene?" Reggie asks in sleepy tones, as he sits up in his lit-tle bed and peers anxiously about.

"No, it's dark night yet. Santa Claus won't be here for hours." "I thought I heard his sleigh rattling down the chimney, and the bells ringing. Is my stocking all right; I

"Look over there near the chimney, Reggie. He turns and gazes in the direction indicated, where two immense black

stockings, lent for the occasion by aunty, are grimly suspended, await-ing the midnight visitor. "Yes; I remember now. Lots of things can fit in them. I must go to

sleep, 'cause he won't come if I don't, and that would be drefful."

\*Nestling down, he draws the clothes about his curly head so Santa Claus can't see him, he whispers to Irene, who, fondly kissing and tucking him snugly in his small bed, as she has seen aunty do, goes to her own couch, wondering why her father or aunt do not as usual, come to night, until wearied out, the troubled

onely child falls asieep.
It is Christmas morning, very early yet and stormy for it is snowing heav-ily. The wind blows cold and bleak from the river around the homestead of the Nevells. Reggie is the first to awake, as he sees the morning light coming dimly through the window a shout of delight that it is at last Christmas, springs from bed, and goes swiftly to the chimney, thrust-ing his hand eagerly into the stocking intended for him. It is empty, quite empty, and so is Irene's, which he next examines in breathless amaze-

Santa Claus never came! There's nothing in our stockings.
What shall I do; what shall I do!"
His bitter sobs of disappointment arouse his sister, whose wonder and grief is almost as great as his own at the sad fact that Santa Claus has forgotten to bring the nice presents he told father he would. "He is a bad old man, I would like

to kick him !" exclaims Reggie, in angry indignation.
"Oh! Reggie, don't say that; it's naughty," remonstrates Irene through

"Yes, I would, and hard, too, for he is just the baddest man in the "What will father say?" returned

"He will fight him like this," and the tures. little fellow doubled up his small fists

"He said he would be sure to come," mused Irene.
"He told a lie and the Devil will get him!" cried Reggie, with evident

satisfaction.
"I wish father or aunty would come to us, for the door is locked and we can't get out," exclaims his sister, who has attempted to leave the room. They had often before been locked in when their poor mamma was ill, as they were told. They feared, rather than loved, their unfortunate parent, of whom they saw very little, but Irene was old enough to perceive that all the trouble and sorrow in their home was caused by her, and her young heart hardened towards her wretched

mamma when she saw the distress of her father, whom she idolized. The light of the quiet Christmas morning shines cheerlessly into one of the lower apartments, where un-



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He thinks of his children and, go-

ing to seek them, they are soon cling-ing about his neck, telling him of their bitter disappointment; and when he

sees their empty stockings remembers that it is Christmas morning, and sun-

dry packages come to his recollection

thrown aside in his despair the night before, which were to have made glad the hearts of his darling little ones.

It is a chilly evening towards the

end of the summer, damp and foggy, having rained all day. Around the fire in one of the cosy, luxurious apartments of Glynne Hall, a quaint, ivy-covered old mansion, situated in

one of the most picturesque parts of Devoushire, a family party are gath-

ered. On a low couch near the fire

a lady and little boy are seated. The child is showing his mother some pic-

tures, while she holds a piece of fancy work in her white, jewelled hands, but her gaze and thoughts are fur-

tively directed towards a handsome, elderly lady in widow's weeds, sitting

in an easy chair opposite, and a tall, slender young man who is earnestly perusing a letter. He folds it up presently, saying to the lady beside

"What a relief, mother, to know

that woman is dead; that the haunting fear of his bringing her here to be mistress need no longer trouble us."

have felt the disgrace of his marriage as time went on, when he would never

"Was he aware of father's death when he first wrote to you, and that

we were looking the world over for him?"

he longed to come home and bring his children if I would receive them."

"And you will be glad to see him, mother, if he comes?" questions her

"He must return, Chester, and take

his father's place now," she sadly answers, "and though in my bitter pride

and anger I sent him from me, I have often wept to think how he must have suffered for his madness through

these long years, and yearned

look once more on the face of my first born,—and the children, poor lit-tle things!"

Glynne?" inquires her daughter-in-law, from the other side of the fire,

her heart full of bitter envy towards

the absent heir and his family, for

she had hoped he might never be found

she had hoped he might never be found and that her husband would become Sir Chester Glynne. "Two, Guy writes. He called his daughter after me,"—a pleased smile flitting across her sad face as "she

think of the low-born mother !" ejacu-

lates Mrs. Chester Glynne, an expres-sion of scornful indignation resting on

her haughty and unprepossessing fea-

not thinking of what you are saying," remonstrates her husband, with an

angry frown.

"Oh, yes, I am, Chester, for such a disgraceful episode in the family record is not easily forgotten," she answers contemptuously, bent on paining her mother-in-law, with whom she

knows she is no favorite. "I am constantly in terror when walking about the grounds that some of your brother's wife's miserable relatives will meet and claim relationship with me."

Her husband is silent, through sheer

amazement and anger, but Lady Glynne replies with flushed cheeks and

something of her old haughtiness:
"Do not, I pray, be alarmed by the

fear of coming in contact with them any longer, for my son has no rela-tives here except those of his own fam-

"Are they all dead, too? How considerate of them, eh, Chester?"

He is too much annoyed to answer her, but, turning eagerly towards his mother, inquires, "Is that the case? I knew old Norton was gone, but there was, I think! a sister also?"

"Yes; but she accompanied them when they left home, and has decided to remain where they now are Gue.

to remain where they now are. Guy writes it is far better so, though he feels grateful to her for the children's

'Impertinence! Why, Sara, you are

epeaks.
"What impertinence, when

"How many are there, Lady

"He was not, but as she was dead

let us know where he had gone to

closed. How keenly he must

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for so worthy a remedy after so many so-called catarrh cur to add disappointment to dis

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der its white covering, a cold, mo-tionless form reposes. She is quiet Don't Surfeit them with trifles-tionless form reposes. She is quiet now, and silent forever in the home she has made so wretched—for Guy Nevelle's wife is dead, called suddenbut select for your ly away during the night, and he sits alone, dazed, shocked, by the sudden-ness of the event which has freed him from the galling chain which for years has so cruelly bound him. To leave her to God's mercy and lay her in her quiet grave is all that is to be



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Far better so, to part from the light of her eyes, the little ones she has lov-ed and cared for since their infancy. Far better she kept from them so they may forget her, and all recoilection of their young lives be banished from their memory. So, martyr-like, the faithful aunt resolved to remain in the lonely, old brown house, brokenhearted, set willing to suffer for her darlings' sake, though never again to look upon their sweet faces. It is the only restitution she can make to them and their father for all they have suf-fered through their connection with her. Poor aunt! Your rare, unselfish devotion will surely meet its reward some day, when for you the sorrow of living is over. "Hark! the Herald Angels sing

Glory to the New Born King. Sweet and clear the ancient hymn thrills through the tastefully decor-ated church in the village of Glynne. It is the close of the early morning service. There are not many worship pers in the little edifice at that hour. One form we notice as he turns, to One form we notice as he turns to leave the crimson-lined, curtained pew, where for an age, as is tablets and monuments above it promises aim, the noble family of Glynne have a fitly reposed, screened from the vulgar gaze of the humble villagers, languidly confessing themselves miserable sinners, while their hearts swell with the pride of hearty rank and fortune and in of beauty, rank and fortune, and in their secret sonl, like the Pharisee of

old, they rejoice that they are not like other men. A monument recently erected to the nemory of Sir Guy Glynne stands out prominently, he pauses before it with gravε, sad face. It is Guy Neville's bandsome features, we see once more, now Sir Guy Neville Glynne come back to the land of his birth to find himself Lord of the Manor. The poor, lowborn wife sleeps is a foreign grave. Seemingly forgotten in his past folly. as his poble relatives and the surround

ing gentry welcome him home.
He turns presently and looks around the ancient sanctuary bright with its Christmas decorations. His gaze rests on the beautiful stained window in the chancel through which the sun is lighting up the form of the blessed Curist kneeling alone in the garden in the bour of His agony. How familiar it looks although the few faces around him are nearly all strange. He goes out into the frosty air and takes his solitary way through the little killage, until he passes into the grounds about Glynne Hall. The well known towers of Glynne Hall. The well-known towers of his old home stand proudly amid the picturesque beauty of the surrounding country, on that bright, glad morning Back to his memory rushes the remembrance of that hour spent in the little room at the top of the old gabled house, so far away by the river side, when in that dark hour, of his despain he looked out on the mornlit waters in that land of his lonely exile and yearning with passionate longing for the eight he was now gazing upon. That life was forever over but the in tense misery of it could never be utter ly effaced. He hasten his steps going up the wide terrace through the ancient portal into the spacious tessellated hall, with its antiquated winding staircase, and quaint-stained

windows. As in days of yore he seeks his mother's boudoir. She is there now stately as ever and retaining much of the beauty of face and form for which she was distinguished in earlier days.

He bends tenderly towards her and in
his clasping arms, she thanks Heaven
he has come back to her in her lonely
widowhood.

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The Big Clock

Presently hurrying footsteps in the and son enter the apartment, havin ? corridor are heard, with the sound of come to the Hall much against Mrs. come to the Hall much against Mrs. Chester's wishes to spend Christmas. oyous laughter. Lady Glyppe looks expectantly towards the door, ejaculating in pleased accents, "Here come the children, my son!" Sir Guy turns to greet his darlings, as they are ushered in by a trim waiting maid. What are those handsomely dressed, merry, little ones, the disappointed, tear-stained children whom we last saw, in that small, dim room across the last Christmas morning, because Santa Claus had forgotten them?

Yes, the same indeed, but this year he has not passed them by; for as they wish their father and newly found grandmother a "Merry Christmas," they tell of wonderful things the old gentleman has brought this time. gentleman has brought this time.

"Oh father!" cries Reggie excitedly, old Santa Claus has brought me, my stockings wouldn't hold them, and Irene got heaps too. I think he must be awful rich."

Ilis graudmother smiled amusedly at the little fellow's innocent delight, while her mental remark is, "Poor boy, what has his life been?"

Irene's soft dark eyes, so like his own, are raised to her father's:—
"I think I must bave heard the angels singing. It was pretty dark and angels singing. It was pretty dark and they woke me up, such beautiful singing about our Saviour and the King. I tried to open the window and look out to see them, but I couldn't. Oh! it was lovely, sweet singing!" Her father glauced at his mother. Her eyes were moist with tears which were very

near his own.
"I heard the angels singing too! exclaims Reggie, but in rather hesitating way. "Were they angels?" gravely queries Irene.
"No, my darling they were people from the village singing carols or hymns for

Christmas morning."
"They never used to sing to us," she answers musingly.
'Oh! cause there is no carols of hymne in our home far, far away,

cries her brother shaking his curly locks impressively, "I like England the bestest," and advancing timidly to her side with a winning smile, "My grandma too," The stately lady caught the beautitul boy to her bosom tenderly kissing

him. It is just at this moment that Sir

Guy's children, and her mental remar is "Why they are Glynnes! possessing the beauty of their father's pround race, instead of the common looking children I hoped to see." Lady Glynne was infatuated with them. She plainly saw, they would always come first to the exclusion of her own spoiled dar ling, and a bitter hate arose in he heart towards the unconscious childre Here we will say "Good bye" to E Guy and his little ones, whom we me. on the solitary beach of a Canadian river, leaving them in their home in Glypne Hall, baving portrayed the con-trast between two Christmases in their

For the first time she looks on Si

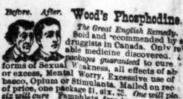
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