

well and there are many worse off than ourselves and many who will have a less merry Christmas."

That night Parson Drayton sat up late in his little study writing away at his Christmas sermon. All had gone to bed but himself, and he steadily wrote at his task while the house was quiet. "There, now," he said at last, "the work is done. I never like to put things off to the very last moment. My sermon is ready and I shall have to-morrow free to prepare in other ways for Christmas day."

As he spoke some one knocked at the front door. He went quietly and opened it.

"Does Mr. Drayton live here?"

"Yes."

The man that asked the question spoke in pleasant tones and was gentlemanly in manner. At the door stood a sleigh with two fine horses attached. After inviting the gentleman in, Mr. Drayton respectfully waited to hear the object of so late a visit.

"I am a stranger to you, sir," he said, "but still you are not entirely such to me; at least I have heard of you. Now, I want you to perform a kind office for me to night, and if you do, your kindness will not be forgotten. My name is Fitz Herbert, as you will see by this marriage license which I hand you, for that is the object of my visit. I wish to be married to-night at the railway station. A sleigh is at the door and will take you there and bring you back again. There are special reasons why the ceremony is to be performed to night; but I must tell you that the bride is in feeble health and unable to leave the car. It is for that reason that I ask you to come where she is."

While he was speaking he had handed Mr. Drayton the marriage license. There it was all fairly written and signed by a gentleman well known to him. The names were James Fitz Herbert, merchant, of New York, and Laura Elizabeth Goode, "of the same city, spinster."

"It is contrary to my rule to marry any where else but in the church."

"And a very good rule it is. It has always been our intention to be married in church, but I hope you may be able to make an exception in this case, as the bride is unable to move from where she is."

Something in the manner and bearing of the stranger inclined the clergyman to accede to his request.

"I will be with you then," he said, "in a moment."

He stole quietly up stairs. His wife and children were fast asleep. The noise had not disturbed them. "Neither," said the parson to himself, "will I disturb them. I will leave a note for my wife on the study table in case she should awake and become alarmed at my absence."

Saying this to himself, he went down stairs and was soon in the sleigh moving at a brisk pace towards the railway station.

There was the train.

"The train is behind time," said Mr. Drayton, "how have you managed to get it to wait here so long?"

"It need not wait much longer," said the stranger, good naturedly, "if you will kindly fulfil your commission."

Saying this they entered a magnificent private car. The furniture, the mirrors, the curtains, were all superb. Reclining on a softly cushioned sofa was the bride, evidently in poor health. Her mother and sister were by her side and were introduced to the clergyman.

"It seems strange to you, sir, no doubt," said the bride's mother, "to be called out on such an errand; but there are good reasons why this marriage should take place to-night. We had hoped to arrive here sooner; but we have come a long journey and have been delayed."

The ceremony was performed in a quiet yet impressive manner, and Mr. Drayton wished the ladies good night and a happy Christmas.

"Before you leave, parson," said Mr. Fitz Herbert, "just look in here" (showing him into a beautifully furnished compartment of the car); "this is my private room, a sort of travelling office. Sit down for a moment, Mr. Drayton," he continued; "you have this night acted like a Christian gentleman to me, and everything, as you will find, on our part has been done in perfect good faith, however strange it may seem to you. Now, there is an envelope for you, which you are not to open till you get home. Do you remember an old school-mate of yours named Chandler Bell?"

"Yes, indeed, I remember him well; we were chums at school and at college too."

"Well, I met him this morning in T. and I told him that this was to be my wedding day, and asked him if he could recommend a clergyman who would marry me in this car. He said that there were many Episcopal clergymen in the city, and that he would get one. I told him that I had made up my mind to act kindly towards whatever clergyman would marry me, so I hoped he would get some one in whom he was interested. 'Oh!' he said at once, 'I wish Jack Drayton was here!' On inquiring, I found that you were stationed at a place which we ought to reach before night, so I said we would just as soon be married in a small place as in a large one, and we came on here; but an accident happened to our engine which delayed us several hours, and I began to fear that we would not reach you in time. However, we did, and here I am. Now, I own a great deal of property and stocks, and there," he said, handing him a paper, "is the possession of ground rent property in T., which I happen to own, and which brings in with unerring certainty \$1,200 a year, paid monthly, so that you will receive regularly for your life time never less than \$100 a month. In ten years a fresh valuation will be made, and as T. is sure to become a much larger city than it is now, the rental will probably be increased, as it is in one of the best positions for a business house in the city. I left all necessary papers with Chandler Bell to-day, who will execute the deed (on receiving a telegram from me) and