

The Mule And The Man.

The mule—he is a gentle beast;
He's satisfied to be the least;
And so is man.
Like man he may be taught some tricks;
He does his work from 8 to 6;
The mule—when he gets mad he kicks;
And so does man.
The mule—he has a load to pull;
He's happiest when he is full;
And so is man.
Like man he holds a patient poise,
And when his work's done will rejoice,
The mule—he likes to hear his voice;
And so does man.
The mule—he has his faults, 'tis true;
And so has man.
He does some things he should not do;
And so does man.
Like man he doesn't yearn for style,
But wants contentment all the while.
The mule—he has a lovely smile;
And so has man.
The mule is sometimes kind and good;
And so is man.
He eats all kinds of breakfast food;
And so does man.
Like man he balks at gaudy dress
And all outlandish foolishness;
The mule's accused of mulishness;
And so is man.
—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

A CHRISTMAS COURTSHIP.

It was three days before Christmas.
So much in love was Van Story that, as he walked up the avenue, the fact did not have the same emphasis that it might have had under different circumstances.
The cool, buoyant air—with a certain crispness about it that the ocean allows even to the metropolis on occasional winter afternoons—might have been hot and sultry and the fact would not have mattered to Van Story.
To a man in love, summer and winter, spring and autumn, lose their variety. Her last look—the radiant, responsive smile—the slight pressure of the hand—a hidden language of the voice—what are seasons, wars, politics, earthquakes, or any other paltry human interests, compared with these?
And yet there was a certain seasonableness in Van Story's thoughts as he walked deliberately along—deliberately, and not with the impatience that love manifests usually, because he knew that on this particular afternoon Miss Pinkton was not alone. "Is she ever alone?" he had thought to himself gloomily, when he had started out. "I can't talk to her on a walk with people all around, staring at us, and this is about the only chance I have. O for half a day of last summer! Thirty minutes in that pavilion would be all I ask for. But what shall I give her for Christmas? Flowers and books are tame, and yet anything more—"
While he was engaged in his reflections, he suddenly came across his old chum Castleton, who was, by the way, Miss Pinkton's cousin. "Ah, old man, whither away? But I think I can guess—" said that dapper individual, looking him over half critically. "Well, Dorothy is at home, and surrounded by all sorts and conditions of men. I've just come from there. And, by the way, you're wanted."
"Wanted where?—at Miss Pinkton's?" said Van Story—as if he didn't know.
"Sure," said Castleton. "There's going to be a church trimming tomorrow night, and Dorothy has agreed to take charge of it. She wants you to help—she told me to tell you if I saw you."
"Who else is going to be there?"
Castleton took his friend by the arm, and for a moment they both turned and looked over the solid iron palings down on the snow-garnished little grass-plot in front of the brown stone dwelling house as if, for one instant, they had mutually agreed to turn their backs on the world.
"Old man," he said, affectionately, "I've been thinking about you all the way from Dorothy's and hoping I should meet you. I suppose if you could really could see Dorothy alone for an hour or so, you'd like it, wouldn't you?"
Van Story looked at his friend solemnly. "You know how I feel about that girl, of course," he said, "but this beastly town always stands in my way."
"I know it. I've been in the same boat myself—simply can't see her alone. People all around—at the theater, in restaurants, and at home brothers and parents always dropping in. Oh, I've been there. But Dorothy's worth having. Dorothy's all right. I take a personal interest, you know, because I've known you both so long, and it just occurred to me that this church-trimming affair might give you an opening."
"I don't see how," replied Van Story. "There'll be a lot of church duffers there, will there not? The superintendent of the Sunday school, and the teacher of the young men's Bible class, and so on."
"Well, you can get her off in a corner, can't you—or get rid of the rest of them some way! Tell them it's postponed—there's your chance, old man." Christmas comes but once a year—make the best of it."
Van Story turned and grasped his friend's hand. "There may be something in it, old chap," he said. "At any rate, I thank you. And now I must be off."
Van Story, when he arrived at the Pinkton mansion, was agreeably surprised to find that the crowd had diminished—there had been an afternoon tea, and this was the tail end of it.

"It was very good of you to come, even if you are late," she said. "You don't do this sort of thing very often, do you?"
"Not any oftener"—Van Story was going too add, than I can help," but stopped himself for an instant. Then he thought it best to be strictly honest so he added—"than I can help. I hate this sort of thing," he continued, looking her frankly in her blue eyes, "because, you know its so unsatisfactory."
"Sir!" she pouted back, "do you mean to say that my tea is unsatisfactory?"
He nodded. For me, I mean," he added. He lowered his voice, altogether this was hardly necessary, as three women at their right—the left-overs—were discussing the opera.
"I shall never be able to see you alone," he said.
"What makes you think that?"
"Well, haven't I been trying to for weeks?" She smiled.
"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. By the way, will you help us trim the church tomorrow night?"
"That's manual labor."
"I know it, and that's what I want you for. If you don't like teas, you surely will enjoy trimming the church. That will give you something to do. I know you are strong, because you used to play football, and besides you look strong."
"Do I—really? So does a hired man." She pouted again.
"Now I intended that for a compliment, and it was horrid of you to turn it the other way. But you will come, will you not? You know the church—the old fashioned brick that sets off the avenue. The sexton will have the ladder, and the greens have all been ordered."
Van Story smiled at her enthusiasm.
"Who's going to be there?" he asked.
"Let me see. They've placed me in charge of the affair, you know, because I really felt I ought to do something this year, and there will be four others to help—the superintendent, Mr. Pompton; the infants' Bible class teacher, Mr. Huddle; the assistant organist, Mr. Winger, and Vestryman Springer—that makes six in all doesn't it—counting us in?"
Van Story arose.
"That's four too many," he said, as he held her hand. "Don't you think so?"
She flushed slightly.
"Yes," she said, softly. "But—you'll be there, won't you? Surely?"
"I'll be there," he replied. "Tomorrow night at eight o'clock."
As he walked back down the avenue, Van Story almost shouted to himself in the exuberance of his new thought. Here at last was his opportunity, after so much waiting—after the long days spent in hoping against hope that the next time he might stand face to face with this beautiful girl and tell her how much he loved her—here, at last, was his chance. He hastily repeated over the names of the church-trimming party that he might not forget them. He would go to the sexton, find their addresses, and the rest was easy.
That individual was at his home, reading the afternoon paper, which he put down apologetically as Van Story entered.
"I am from Miss Pinkton, about trimming the church tomorrow night. Have the greens been ordered?"
"Yes, sir; they will be delivered tomorrow."
"Good. And now will you be so kind as to give me the names and addresses of Mr. Pompton, Mr. Huddle, Mr. Winger and Mr. Springer?"
The sexton called them out from his record-book, and Van Story, armed with the precious paper, hurried off to the nearest hotel typewriter.
"I want this dictated on plain paper," he said to that imperturbable young lady, and he gave the following brief business note:
"Dear Sir,—Owing to an unexpected and important engagement of the head of the Trimming Committee I am requested by Miss Pinkton to say that the trimming of the church, which was to have taken place tomorrow night, is postponed. You will therefore please not attend tomorrow night, but come on the following night. Yours truly,
"W. A. Van Story."
"I want that letter to be sent to each of these four addresses," he said, "at once," and as he hurried over to his jeweler he exclaimed gleefully to himself, "At last!"
The next evening, they walked over to the church together.
"We must be early," she said, as she sat down on the steps leading up to the altar. The pulpit, tall and grim and stately, towered above her shapely head almost like a benediction. Far above them, the lights in the chandelier gleamed fitfully.
Surely, could there be a better place to love and be loved than in the sacred sanctuary set within the beating heart of the sordid world and yet so far removed from it? And as she looked up at him, instinctively she felt that in such a place his words must ring true, and that she might trust him.
He took her hand.
"Dorothy," he said, "I couldn't have told you how much I loved you before. I wanted your answer all to myself. Somehow, the sea of city life seemed to shut out the sound of my voice. I longed for a quiet country lane, or the great silent ocean. But I could not

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wait. And here at last we are safe." He put his arm around her. "Do you love me?" he said.
Her head dropped silently down on his shoulder.
And then followed that blissful moment, a moment that stands out in one's life forever after—the moment of life, when love's dream is realized, and to these two it was as if the chorus of unseen saints was chanting their happiness.
Suddenly she raised her head. There was a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.
"You have forgotten something," she said.
"No I haven't," he replied triumphantly, misunderstanding her. "I have it here."
He produced a tiny object that glittered in the dim light and sent out tiny shafts of lambent fire.
"Your Christmas present," he said. "Two days ahead, but none the less real. I didn't know what to give you, until I thought of this."
He slipped it on her finger.
"It is beautiful," she said at last, "beautiful."
There was a moment of silence, interrupted by a sound like the chirping of joyful birds. Then she spoke again.
"When I said you had forgotten something," she said, the twinkle coming back to her eyes, "I wasn't thinking of this."
She held up the ring admiringly. I was thinking of the others—why, they may be here any minute."
Van Story caught her hand in his once more.
"No he said smilingly. "You see, dear, it was my only chance. I just had to do it. I sent word to all the others—wrote them each a note, you know, that this thing was postponed until tomorrow night, on account of an important engagement. You didn't mind, did you? It was the truth, wasn't it? I wanted to be alone with you. It was our only chance. Don't you see it was?"
She dropped her hands by her side suddenly. The color left her face and then came back again.
"You did that?" she said. "How could you? How dreadful! Oh, why did you do it? What can I ever say to them? You wrote and told them not to come tonight—did you do that?"
He caught her hands again in his.
"Above the stately old church bells in the spire chanted out the hour."
"Yes, dearest," he said, "I did it, and I'm glad of it. Nothing can ever make me sorry. I wrote the whole bunch of 'em not to come."
She raised her half-mournful, half-merry eyes to his.
"So did I," she said.
TOM L. MASSON.



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