#### Under the Mistletoe Bough.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

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 engued in weaving graceful devices for the adornment of home, and many a joyous Christmas song rang forth from light and youthful hearts.

in one of the spacious receptionrooms 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 daughter of Squire Morton, and her cousin, Clare Winton. As the setting beams of the winter sun glanced through the long windows, and played upon their fair features, a more charming sight could scarcely be conceived. Yes, vonth is indeed beautiful, in its early sweetness, when no cloud of sorrow has rested upon the heart, and when the light of hope shines full upon the prow of the vessel which is bearing the youthful voyager onward.

"How lovely the room will look when it is quite completed, dear Gertrade!" exclamed her cousin. "These garlands which we have already hung a e exceedingly effective. But here 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 arrangement? I wish he were here."

"I do not doubt but that he will be here soon," rejoined Gertrude, as a soft blush, which she in vain strove to conceal, played upon her fair face. " Besides, the time appointed has scarcely arrived."

There was a softened light in Ger-

test her affection.

idea.



you knew that I had divined a secret?" cried Clare, as she passed her arm affectionately around her cousin's neck "and that it concerns two persons?" "I must first be convinced that you possess the power of divination tefore I 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 regard them as a challenge to prove my what it is I have discovered."

as her cheek grew yet more crimson.

in a very remarkable degree! You can positively read my thoughts, and thus save me the trouble of shaping them into words! But suffer me to say, my dear cousin," she proceeded, affectionately, "that I know no one more worthy of your affection than he, who, measure. But there goes the hall-bell; and as I have little doubt that it proclaims Mr. Fenton's arrival, I will withdraw, and give him an opportunity to breathe those tender things which are unutterable in the presence of strang. ers."

cousin called to her to return.

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 Clare's assurance that Edward Fenton her mind. reciprocated her attachment lingered in

noble features, Edward Fenton looked, is so natural to youth. But soon she

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Newcastle, Miramichi, N. B.

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 apartment in Edward Fenton's face. The tone in which the latter was seated on that which he addressed her was so strange-December afternoon. ly cold, that her limbs trembled violent-

And now, as briefly as may be, we ly, and, unable to suport herself, she must trouble the reader with a word or | sank upon a seat.

"What is the matter, Edward?" she two of explanation. Edward's father' Dr. Fenton, and Squire Morton had gasped. " You bring no Christmas 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 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 bright to last. Then I gathered a lovesenior.

As time passed, however, and the ly human flower, only to find, by expeyoung friends left their native village--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 re\_ and Edward to Eton, and thence to lease you from your vows !"

Oxford-they met but seldom. The education of both was now completed vet separation was again at hand. An only brother of Dr. Fenton's, residing in London (himself in the medical pro- simple dignity, and grasping a chair for fession) had been left a widower, and support she spoke thus : being childless, he had entreated that

Edward, upon the conclusion of his college career, might spend at least a heaven, I would not that any mean year with him.

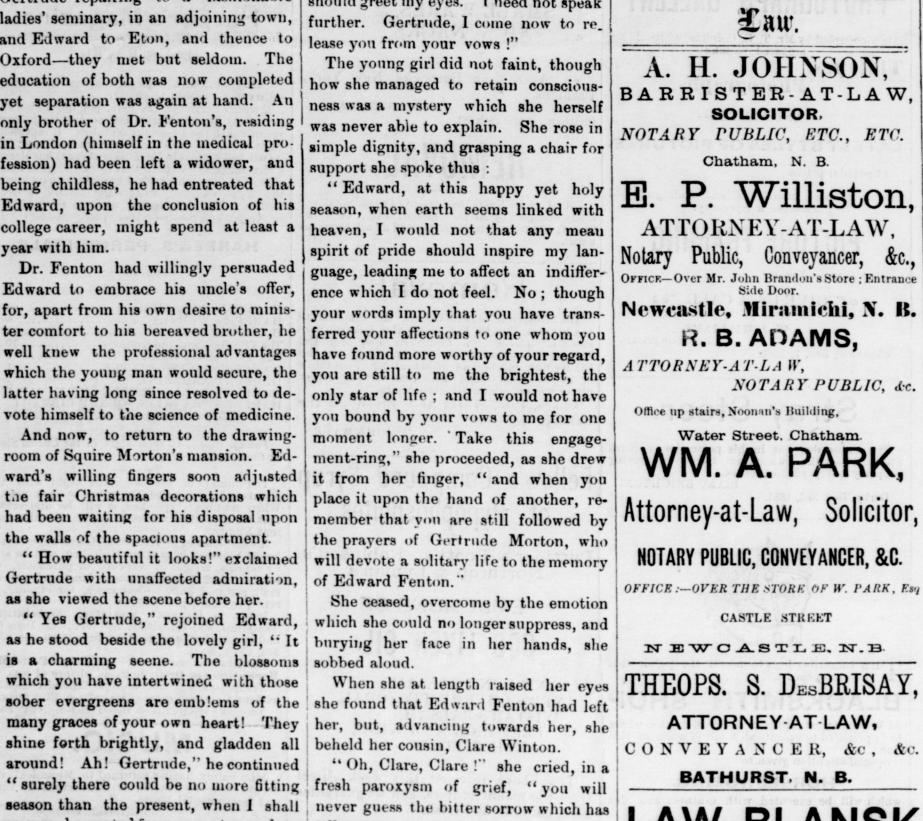
Dr. Fenton had willingly persuaded guage, leading me to affect an indiffer-Edward to embrace his uncle's offer, ence which I do not feel. No; though for, apart from his own desire to minister comfort to his bereaved brother, he ferred your affections to one whom you well knew the professional advantages which the young man would secure, the you are still to me the brightest, the latter having long since resolved to devote himself to the science of medicine. you bound by your vows to me for one

of Edward Fenton.

And now, to return to the drawingroom 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.

"How beautiful it looks!" exclaimed will devote a solitary life to the memory Gertrude with unaffected admiration. as she viewed the scene before her.

"Yes Gertrude," rejoined Edward, which she could no longer suppress, and as he stood beside the lovely girl, "It burying her face in her hands, she is a charming seene. The blossoms sobbed aloud 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 "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





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