

LADY'S CHRISTMAS STORY

She walked up to the editor's desk with somewhat of a child's bewilderment in her liquid eyes. Outside grime and fog over-spread the city, but the streets were full of the jound noise, the rush and struggle of before Christmas traffic. The holiday, in fact, was but three days off; the editor had just sent down the very last proofs of the articles which were to make up his Christmas edition.

Motioning toward the chair at his right, he said, "Will you not sit down and let me know what I can do for you?"

Lady's breath came hard. A quick color played in her cheek. Her ill-gloved hands clasped themselves nervously over something which they held. Taking firm hold of her waiting courage, she said, with a half gasp, "I came to—bring you a Christmas story. Won't you read it, please—if you are not busy—and—if it you can give me the money for it—right away?"

"The innocent! the preposterous innocent!" Mr. Vantage said to himself with an inward thrill of amusement. But the girl's voice was so ravishing—so soft, so clear, so full of flute suggestions, despite its tremor, that listening was a pure delight. He would make her speak again. Glancing at the card which lay on his desk, he said tentatively:

"Well, you see, Miss Carroll, we are rather full-handed on Christmas stuff. May I ask it—there is any special reason why you wish to dispose of what you have brought?"

"Would I be here—otherwise?" Lady said, sitting up very straight. Vantage smiled a little and half hid out his hand, saying:

"Have you much experience in writing this sort of thing?"

"I—I never wrote anything but letters in all my life," Lady said, biting her lips to control her tremor.

As she laid her package of scribbled sheets upon the desk, a voice at his elbow said, "Read it, Vantage. You will just have time before we go out for dinner."

Looking shyly across, she saw another man of whom she had been unconscious. He was lounging in a big office-chair, idly turning over the leaves of a Christmas book. As Vantage turned to him, a quick look passed between them. Then when the editor plunged into the manuscript, the other came around and laid a pile of holiday literature at Lady's elbow, saying:

"Perhaps these may amuse you while you wait."

Vantage's eyebrows went up perceptibly. Never before had "the chief," Fane Richmond, Esq., the bachelor owner of three-fourths of the paper's stock and several million's beside, been known to take notice of a woman-caller.

When the two ladies were at college, Richmond had saved Vantage from himself—had kept him from flinging to the winds his time, his talent, and a moderate inheritance. In consequence, he felt himself deeply bound to his salvage. He was tall and slight, with a thin face and deep, dreamy eyes—altogether so unlike the person who would seem likely to influence Vantage, that Lady wondered not a little over that gentleman's complaisance.

Though she tried faithfully to wrap her consciousness in the gorgeous Santa Claus, the fairies, the exaggerated roses and lilies and babes of Bethlehem, that sprawled in red and gold over cards and booklets, she saw, in spite of all, the reader's face, as she skimmed page after page, smiling a little here and there, and positively chuckling outright, albeit the story dealt with the entirely serious return of a repentant runaway heiress, with the usual compliment of small children, her forgiveness and reinstatement in the paternal hall.

"Will you wait a little longer? I'll see what space we have left." "Do," said Mr. Richmond approvingly; then, as Vantage went through the door, "I am sure there is room, Miss Carroll—one can't have too many good things for Christmas."

"But—but—this is not good—this story of mine—only the best I could do—and that I know is—bad. Give it to me—and let me go away. I don't see how I ever dared to come," Lady said, standing up with clasped hands, a very model of distress.

"No doubt you came for—a very good reason—won't you tell me what it is?" Mr. Richmond asked, putting her gently back in her chair and him taking Vantage's place.

"I will try—but—but it's a long story—else I cannot make you understand," the girl said, leaning a little toward him, her face full of trouble. "You see I live in the south—Carolina—we are very poor—everybody there is—everybody that is of our sort who had nothing but land and slaves. Last summer a lady my mother knew years ago came to stay with us a while. She said my voice was wonderful—a fortune if I cultivated it and offered to give me a three-years course here in New York—to be paid for when I am earning money. Of course, I was glad to come—gladder when three weeks ago someone wanted me to sing in a concert—and said I was worth twenty-five dollars for it—and Mrs. Wilton brought me here, said I might do as I pleased with the money. That made me very happy—I wrote to the mother asking if I should send her the money, or what would it buy. Here is her answer. See, she says, 'Send the money dear child—well as I would love to have Christmas gifts as your earning. Sallie, your good nurse, is down with rheumatism I have been casting about on all sides for a way to get her medicines and flannels. When I read her your letter, she smiled in spite of her pain, saying, 'Bless de Lord, my child ain't forgot her home folks! Tell her I pray for her every night.'"

"On top of that," Lady choked for a minute, "I caught cold—the doctor said it might ruin my voice to sing—and—and Mrs. Wilton utterly forbade it. I could not disobey her as matters stood, but oh, my heart was fit to break. Then the thought came to me to write something, and bring to your paper—"

"Why did you choose it from all the others?" Mr. Richmond asked as the narrator made a long pause. Vantage had come in noiselessly and stood listening unperceived. Lady said, her cheeks painfully hot; "I—I—hardly like to tell you—you have been so kind about it—but it was this way. I knew your paper was one of the first, the bitterest, in the Abolition fight. In my despair, it was nothing less—it seemed easy to come and say to you—in-

deed to demand—'Buy what I offer that I may have money to relieve the suffering you helped to create.' Poor Sallie is the last slave born on our plantation. If—if things were as they used to be, she would have grown up hale and strong with warm clothes, good food, and somebody to take care of her. She is the youngest of ten—with so many mouths, some must go hungry. Of course mother did all she could for them—but when the land is poor—and then droughts every other year—you have—oh so little for anybody! Sallie at 25 looks older than her mother—she loves me—she carried me in her arms when she was a little bit of a girl. I love her dearly—that is why I came. It did not seem wrong—but—but—I think I had better have stayed away."

"Indeed! Why?" asked Mr. Richmond. "Because—because it is no better than begging," Lady said, tears springing again to her eyes. "Though—really—there was no other way to help Sallie—"

"Are there no poor-houses in Carolina?" Vantage asked, coming forward. Lady got up with flashing eyes, and said, steadily:

"Yes—but do you think we would let one of our own people go there while we had a roof and a crust? Please give me back my manuscript, sir, and let me go. I see that—that my coming was—altogether a mistake."

"I can't—it's—it's in the composing-room," Vantage said, mendaciously obedient to the telegraphing from Mr. Richmond's eyes.

"Then—then—keep it—I know it is—worthless," Lady said, turning to go. Mr. Richmond stepped before her, saying gravely:

"You are mistaken. Miss Carroll—your Christmas story is worth a great deal. Wait a moment—you shall have a check."

"Yes—it's quite the best one we've got," Vantage said, heartily, comprehending that "the chief" meant the spoken story, not the written one.

Lady's face shone, though doubt lingered in her eyes.

"Do you truly think so? Then the rest must be very bad," she said, hesitatingly. "It—it is really worth anything, I shall be the happiest girl in New York."

"It is worth a great deal more than we can pay for it," Richmond said, smiling behind his moustache. "Newspapers, you know, Miss Carroll, have to drive hard bargains with individuals, so as to be public benefactors. Vantage, please make out a check for fifty dollars."

"Not to me!" Lady said, catching her breath. "You—you must send it to Sallie herself—else how will you know that that I am not an impostor? Oh! I wish she had it—this very minute!"

"Where does Sallie live?" asked Vantage. "Then when Lady had named the Carolina town nearest the plantation. 'We can telegraph it there to-night—if you know any one who would forward it.'"

Lady did know some one. As in a dream she gave the name, saw messages written out, messengers despatched, a little later found herself put safe into a cab and driving homeward through dusk streets glowing momentarily thicker with big blurred globes of white and yellow light. More than once she pinched her arm, laughing a little delighted laugh, and said aloud, "Lady Carroll, are you certain sure that you are—yours?"

Late that night Vantage said, puffing a furious blue cloud, and gazing up into its rings, "Really—that was a bit out of comic opera. The idea of coming at us with that story, because of our politics! Oddest part was—while she was talking, I really felt that she was exactly right about it. Do you know, though, I think that girl would starve sooner than do for herself what she did for her nurse?"

"Sure of it," said Richmond laconically. "Of course, you'll print what she brought?"

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"For one thing, no room. For another, want of time. For a third—it's atrocious, though I must do her the justice to say that there is a pleasing paucity of demonstration in it—kisses and such matters are all left to the imagination."

"I thought she could not be underbred—even on paper. But see here, my good fellow—I can't and won't have her feelings hurt with the thought that we deceived her—that her stuff was not really printable. It must go—it it swamps the editorial page."

"Well, well! I'll manage it somehow," Vantage said, throwing away his cigar. Aunt Mandy Carroll's cabin was rather picturesque in summer. It stood on the edge of a big old field, had a background of forest, and a wreathy mat of gourd-vine and wistaria over the arbor in front of the one door. But in December it was comfortless enough—with the wind whistling like mad through the cranied walls, low clouds scudding swift overhead, and fine, needle-sharp rain searching out the leaks in the roof and the cracks about the one window.

Two beds, a trunk, various old-fashioned chests, a table, three chairs and a rusty tin made up its furnishing—not to mention the pot, pan and skillet which stood on the big hearth, back of which a log fire smouldered and flamed up the wide chimney throat. Sallie in the bed nearest it stretched out her swollen hands toward the blaze, and said rather slowly, "Mammy, does you reckon mistis will come ter see me today? It's a-rainin' right down."

"God knows, child,—I don't," the mother said, her thick lips trembling a little. "Fear ter me like Sallie you's better dis mornin'. Et I bake ye a little hoe cake an' fry ye some meat, don't ye feel ye kin eat a little?"

Sallie shook her head. "I ain't got so much misery in my joints," she said, "but I've weak as er kitten,—don't seem like I kin swaller corn bread. I'll wait. Et mistis comes, she's sho ter fetch me er biscuit."

Mandy's lip trembled more violently. "Honey, mistis cooked de las flour in her barrel fer you yistidy," she said swallowing hard, "but—but she told me ne'er min'—de Lord would provide—'an' when she say it she sorter smile—so maybe she got er idee how He gwine do it."

A deliberate knock at the door announced the doctor—a patient, grizzled, over-worked gentleman, who, after examining Sallie, said to her mother, "Well, Mandy, I've done my share. All Sallie needs now is something to eat and to wear. Smother her in flannel,—red flannel, mind you, and make her eat six times a day."

"Yes, sir," said Mandy, cursing him away. To his back she said aloud fiercely,

"Eat and wear? What is it ter come from! Ef dat what cyore sick folks, Doctor Geeble, whyn't you tote it in yo saddle-bags?"

As she turned to close the door, she spied a buggy coming slowly along the mazy country road which ran a little way off. A sight so unusual chained her to the spot. When a minute later the buggy halted at her door, she darted out, exclaiming, "Howdy, mistis, howdy! Sallie's better,—an' des er pinin, fer de sight er you."

"That is good news," said Mrs. Carroll. "Mandy, you have not forgotten Brother Green. He is the minister who stayed with us in the storm last summer. He has driven out from town this morning, on purpose to do us a kindness."

"I members Brudder Green. Sarvent sub," said Mandy, hurrying her visitors in out of the rain. Mrs. Carroll went up to the bed and laid something in Sallie's weak fingers, saying, "Lady sent you this, Sallie, with her love, for Christmas. Now I hope you will hurry and get well."

Mandy fell on her knees at the bedside, crying out as she kissed the crisp bank notes. "Money! Bless God! Bless de Lord! Bless de sweet chile dat sent it, dat ain't forgot her black mammy, an' her Sallie what rocked her cradle so many many times. De good Lawd put it in her heart—I know he did—an' me just been 'cusin' him ob lettin' my chile die!"

Sallie was sobbing weakly in her joy. Mrs. Carroll turned her head away; the minister's eyes were misty; he raised his hands and said softly:

"Sparrows! My sisters, let us pray."

The next Christmas but one there was a fine turmoil all about the Carroll household,—which had somehow taken on an unwanted air of prosperity. Wreaths of holly and pine overarched the doors; log fires went roaring up all the big chimneys; the windows shone; the brasses on the old-fashioned furniture were resplendent as the sun—in the dining-room a spotless table was tricked out with whatever of silver and china and glass the mansion still afforded.

In the kitchen, Mandy was roasting, before the fire, a sucking pig and a very alderman of turkeys, muttering to herself as she turned them slowly around, "De chile always loved vittles cooked dis erway. Dun' spec' she's had nothing fit ter eat sense she went erway."

Besides these, there were frosted pound-cakes, cheese-cakes, transparent pudding, potato-pone, and many other good things, all ready and waiting to be eaten.

Mrs. Carroll walked from room to room in a new black gown, with gold-rimmed spectacles pushed above her brow. Mandy, spick and span in pink lincey and a white ruffled apron, looked alternately from her mistress to her daughter with equal pride in each.

For Sallie was straight and strong now, the very model of a neat-handed Phillis. Like her mistress, she wore black, but her white apron outdid her mother's, for while Mandy was content with ruffles, Sallie was further bedizened with wide crocheted insertion.

Presently there was the clang of a gate, the roll of wheels on the drive, the opening of a door, and Lady flung herself ecstatically into her mother's arms—while Mandy rushed at the tall man who stood smiling over the scene, crying as she wrung the hand he held out, "Oh, Marse Richmond, you musn't nebbet take our chile crost dat big water no mo'!"

"We will all go together next time," said the gentleman. "She has talked of coming home, every day of our absence."

Lady—Mrs. Fane Richmond now—touched her husband's arm, saying, "Fane—here is Sallie—my Sallie whom you saved once,—your first and best Christmas gift to me."

"And Sallie gave you to me," Mr. Richmond said with a beaming smile. "I think, sweetheart, the transaction leaves me always and deeply in her debt."

An Expensive Shawl.

The highest price paid for a Cashmere shawl was five hundred thousand francs, or about £20,000. This shawl was a present by King Charles X. of France, and is now in the possession of the Duchess of Northumberland. It is a masterpiece of the art of a species of Persian cat. The hair of this cat's fur is so extremely fine and elastic that a single hair is scarcely perceptible to the naked eye. The spinning and weaving of this material, and the production of a single shawl like the one referred to, require a few thousands of cat-skins and the labour of several years. The Duchess of Northumberland's shawl measures eight yards square, but so fine and elastic is it that it can, if necessary, be compressed into a large collee cup. Fine Cashmere shawls are always expensive. Mr. Baden-Powell stated that one of the first-rate quality, weighing 7lb., will in the country of their manufacture cost not less than £300.

BORN.

Truro, Dec. 12, to the wife of S. C. Morrison, a son.
Bristol, Dec. 3, to the wife of W. H. Smith, a son.
Stanley, Dec. 4, to the wife of Thomas Currie, a son.
Halifax, Dec. 5, to the wife of George Jackson, a son.
Hantsport, Dec. 5, to the wife of James Harvie, a son.

Lunenburg, Dec. 9, to the wife of William Young, a son.

St. Martins, Dec. 9, to the wife of Geo. W. Weir, a son.

St. John, to the wife of Rueben Wignmore, a daughter.

Moncton, Dec. 11, to the wife of John B. Magee, a son.

Sackville, Dec. 10, to the wife of Ernest Thompson, a son.

Hantsport, Dec. 1, to the wife of Mr. Algiers, a daughter.

Halifax, Dec. 9, to the wife of John Weaver, a daughter.

Halifax, Dec. 10, to the wife of M. E. Cochran, a daughter.

Parrsboro, Dec. 11, to the wife of James W. Day, a daughter.

Windsor, Dec. 9, to the wife of Henry Parkman, a daughter.

Moncton, Dec. 13, to the wife of William L. Lockhart, a son.

Port Maitland, Dec. 10, to the wife of J. E. Coate, a daughter.

River Herbert, Dec. 4, to the wife of Arthur Porter, a daughter.

Mountville, Dec. 11, to the wife of Clarke Robinson, a daughter.

St. John, Dec. 12, to the wife of William J. McSweeney, a son.

Brookside, C. B. Dec. 9, to the wife of E. T. McKee, a daughter.

New Minas, Dec. 12, to the wife of Leonard S. Bishop, a daughter.

Port Maitland, N. S., Dec. 10, to the wife of Capt. P. E. Crosby, a son.

Port Maitland, N. S., Dec. 6, to the wife of Jos. follows, a daughter.

MARRIED.

Lower Stewiacke, Dec. 12, Robert E. Taylor to Alice B. Fisher.

Point Wolfe, N. B., Dec. 6, William F. Matthews to Eleanor Corbett.

Truro, Dec. 9, by Rev. J. Robbins, Joseph McNutt to Georgiana Ross.

Windsor, Dec. 12, by Rev. J. S. Coffin, Thomas J. Curry to Annie King.

Parrsboro, Dec. 16, by Rev. W. H. Evans, Arthur Fulton to Lida Brown.

Campbellton, Dec. 4, by Rev. A. F. Carr, Hiram H. Burris to Alice Parker.

Pine Grove, N. S., by Rev. A. C. Dennis, John A. Scott to Rebecca Kitchen.

Halifax, Dec. 6, by Rev. Dyson Hague, George T. Allua to Emma M. Power.

Mailand, Dec. 12, by Rev. T. C. Jack, George McIntosh to Anna L. Williams.

Upper Stewiacke, Dec. 6, by Rev. A. D. Gunn, Sydney Dean to Susan Dean.

Dorchester, Dec. 13, by Rev. H. R. Baker, Rufus D. Ward to Nellie P. Harris.

Isaac's Harbor, Dec. 1, by Rev. David Price, Nathaniel Keizer to Lillie Jarvis.

Lot 10, P. E. I., Dec. 5, by Rev. H. Carter, John McLean to Catherine Palmer.

Pictou, Dec. 7, by Rev. Andrew Arnitt, Duncan McGregor to Maggie Cameron.

Isaac's Harbor, Dec. 12, by Rev. David Price, Obadiah A. Bezonson to Charity H. Griffin.

North River, Dec. 6, by Rev. J. D. Spidle, Alfred Prosser to Angelina Lounsbury.

New Glasgow, Dec. 11, by Rev. Anderson Rogers, Daniel Holmes to Minnie Grant.

Ohio, N. S., Dec. 12, by Rev. Dr. Cartwright, John R. Robinson to Sarah H. Spurr.

Liverpool, Dec. 11, by Rev. W. F. Glendenizing, Emanuel Grace to Catherine Roy.

Grand Harbor, Dec. 8, by Rev. W. S. Covert, Alvin C. Franland to Minnie Y. Gopht.

Chatham, Dec. 6, by Rev. Jos. McCoy, Samuel J. Kingston to Catherine Henderson.

Wolville, Dec. 13, by Rev. T. A. Higgins, Rev. H. H. Saunders to Annie E. Coldwell.

Melrose, Dec. 12, by Rev. John Calder, Isaac Demmons to Mary Jane Whidden.

Perth County, Dec. 10, by Rev. G. A. Giberson, William H. Wright to Orissa Orser.

Campbellton, Dec. 7, by Rev. A. F. Carr, George Wilson Mann to Catherine Jackson.

St. Stephen, Dec. 8, by Rev. W. Penna, George H. Thompson to Gertrude F. Hamilton.

St. John, Nov. 27, by the Rev. W. O. Raymond, George I. McLean to Sarah L. Lunn.

St. Stephen, Dec. 8, by Rev. W. Penna, George H. Thompson to Gertrude F. Hamilton.

Liverpool, Dec. 9, by Rev. A. W. M. Harley, Howard Scott Wedge to Ellen Wynacht.

St. John, Dec. 13, by Rev. George M. Campbell, Robert Thompson to Alvinia Crawford.

New Glasgow, Dec. 6, by Rev. Arch Bowman, T. Arthur O'Brien to Florence McDougall.

Gabarus, C. B., Dec. 5, by Rev. D. Sutherland, Daniel A. White to Mary Ann Matheson.

Woodstock, Dec. 13, by Rev. Thos. Marshall, Frederick McLean to Annie M. Johnston.

Charlottetown, Dec. 12, by Rev. W. Hamlyn, Henry Warwick Longworth to Mary Eva Hensley.

River Herbert, Dec. 12, by Rev. P. H. Robinson, Charles P. F. Fellows to Annie May Coleman.

Lower Economy, N. S., Dec. 5, by Rev. Andrew Gray, Thomas A. Corbett to Rachel Faulkner.

Leonardsville, N. B., Dec. 6, by the Rev. R. E. Steeves, Capt. Leverett A. Hainspecker to Ina Welch.

Connors, N. B., Nov. 29, by Rev. Father Dumont, assisted by Rev. Father Dumont, C. J. Fitzpatrick to Minnie Taylor.

DIED.

Richibucto, Dec. 10, Mary Young.

Halifax, Dec. 9, Samuel Creed, 84.

St. John, Dec. 18, Robert Reed, 79.

Halifax, Dec. 5, Michael Neville, 54.

Milltown, Dec. 3, Eliza Johnson, 17.

Westville, Dec. 8, Charles Davies, 65.

Maccan, Dec. 6, Carrie M. Brown, 12.

Pictou, Dec. 6, William Sutherland, 41.

Coldbrook, Dec. 12, William Taylor, 45.

Richibucto, Dec. 8, William Lawson, 59.

Lepreux, Dec. 16, John McNutt, sr., 68.

Allendale, Dec. 7, Jeremiah Connolly, 73.

Thorburn, Dec. 11, Thomas H. Fraser, 32.

Kentville, Dec. 13, Benjamin H. Calkin, 74.

Milton, N. S., Dec. 11, James E. Suttie, 62.

Preston, Dec. 15, Rev. George R. Neill, 87.

Fredericton, Dec. 1, Christie E. Stewart, 16.

Westville, N. S., Dec. 10, Charles Davies, 65.

Chatham, Dec. 12, Mrs. Andrew McInnes, 82.

Moncton, Dec. 13, Christina J. McMillan, 43.

Halifax, Dec. 17, Sister Mary Michael Sweeney.

Lake Darling, Dec. 19, Catherine S. Churchill, 41.

Hebron, Dec. 1, of typhoid fever, James Farin, 17.

Halifax, Dec. 10, Barbara, wife of James Baxter, 63.

St. John, Dec. 11, of consumption, James Knox, 74.

Riverton, Dec. 8, Mrs. Catherine McNaughton, 66.

Grand Lake, Dec. 4, of cancer, Mrs. Caroline Wood, 68.

St. John, Dec. 15, Bessie, wife of Thomas Dunlop, 49.

Guyshoro, Dec. 7, Mary, daughter of Hugh McDonald.

Stellarton, N. S., Dec. 13, Margaret, wife of Thomas Bain, 61.

Tyron, P. E. I., Feb. 5th, of consumption, Lydia Lockport, 30.

Lockport, Dec. 8, Nellie Mand, wife of Frank Irwin, 30.

Strait of Canso, Dec. 7, Willena, daughter of W. F. Curtis, 3.

Milton, N. S., Dec. 12, Birdie, daughter of J. L. Hughes, 7.

Halifax, Dec. 17, Lillian Leila, daughter of P. S. Mason, 24.

Charlottetown, Dec. 10, James Berry, of St. Martins.

Stellarton, Dec. 11, Minnie, daughter of Thomas J. Cameron, 5.

Fredericton, Dec. 14, Ernest L., son of George F. Atherton, 32.