

THE CHRISTMAS STOCKING.

Oh, it's all very nice for you!
But for me it's a tale of woe.
I'm an article sold to view,
For they've stuffed and they've crammed me
so

That I'm ruined beyond repair.
There's a dreadful tin horn, dear me!
That has made an enormous tear
By pushing straight through my knee.

And that red woolen dog—his tail
Is stuck through a hole in my toe;
And that self-same—hope 'twon't sail—
Has burst through my seam, I know.

And that jumping-jack—I can feel
Where he's made a rip in my leg;
And that gun's gone through my heel,
And I'm slipping off from my peg.

And the fire—I'm hung so near—
Has melted that candy cane,
And I'm all stuck up. Oh, dear!
I'm a total wreck, it is plain.

And the worst of it is, you see,
That to-morrow I shall depart,
With a very nice company,
In the depths of a rag-man's cart!

—Emma A. Oppor.

CROSS PURPOSES;

Or, The Widow Mack's Disappointment—A New Year's Story.

[Written for This Paper.]

OR almost three years the sharp-voiced, black-eyed Widow Mack, Dr. Paul Blake's housekeeper, had ruled with a rod of iron. But the Doctor, who was a single man of thirty odd, peace-loving and absorbed in his profession, submitted meekly, principally from the fact of his housekeeper's

culinary skill and general ability. Hence the frivolous youth of Barnmouth insisted that it was simply a matter of time as to the ultimate matrimonial result.

Three times a year Mrs. Mack had been in the habit of giving Dr. Blake "warning" in more or less impassioned terms. The alleged causes were sins of omission or commission on the respective parts of the "third help," Bob, the office-boy, and Miss Doris Lane, the Doctor's nineteen-year-old ward. It was the morning after Christmas Day in the year of grace 1888. Dr. Blake was in his library and office combined, hoping for a quiet hour with the *Lancet*, which he held in his hand with pages uncut, as Mrs. Mack, whose black eyes were snapping ominously, flung—I use the word advisedly—into the room.

With a premonition of what was coming, the Doctor laid aside the pamphlet. "Well, Mrs. Mack," he said, wearily, "which—that is, who—I mean, what is it now?"

"This day week, Dr. Blake, either Miss Doris or I leave—you can choose between us," responded the Widow Mack, with ominous calmness. Barring the name of the offender, her formula of warning was always the same. Possibly she dreamed that by patient persistence in this line the Doctor in some unguarded moment might be led to say: "Then, Mrs. Mack, my advice will be—yourself."

Why not? The widow only acknowledged to thirty-six, her figure was trim, her face not uncomely and she held property in her own right. In addition to this her cookery was unequalled, and it is not recorded that masculine hearts untouched by personal charms have been reached through the vulgar medium of the stomach?

"Not being the dirt under Miss Doris' feet," scornfully continued Mrs. Mack, before Dr. Blake could speak, "I don't propose being trod on no longer. The idea!" said the irate lady, with a backward toss of her head; "ordering me out of her study'er just because I said her goings on with your nephew, Paul Blake, was scandalous! Things have come to a pretty pass in this house, I think!"

Dr. Blake groaned in spirit as Mrs. Mack slammed the door behind her. "Why can't she let Doris alone," he muttered, and when he said "Doris" it was with a peculiarly tender inflection. But that, perhaps, was because of the semi-parental relation in which he pretended to stand toward her.

Dr. Blake communed with himself for a moment or two and then, laying aside the uncut pamphlet, rose and regarded himself curiously in the glass over the mantel. "You're nothing but an old fool, Paul Blake," he said, turning abruptly away. Yet the earnest, scholarly face and dark inscrutable eyes which had returned his brief glance were by no means deserving of such

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in oil. Before it, holding palette and brush, stood Doris, the graceful outlines of whose figure even the ugly blue bottomed blouse reaching to her feet could not hide.

Reclining at ease in an old arm-chair near the little air-tight stove which served to warm the interior, was Paul Blake, the doctor's good-looking artist nephew, twirling an unlighted cigarette between his slim white fingers.

Before Doctor Blake could step forward to announce his presence, Paul spoke—evidently apropos of some thing under discussion.

"It's no use talking, Doris," he said, somewhat petulantly. "If uncle Paul won't give his consent to our marriage, as you seem to think, why we must do without it—that's all."

Doctor Blake turned very pale as he heard these words not intended for his ear. But pulling himself together with an effort, he stepped forward.

At his unexpected appearance Doris gave a sudden start and, crimsoning to her fair temple, threw a cloth over the portrait. But not before Doctor Blake had caught a glimpse of his nephew's broad white forehead and expressive eyes.

The Doctor, pretending to have heard and seen nothing, greeted Paul with his usual easy courtesy. But that usually self-possessed young man, muttering something about a previous engagement, made a hasty exit, leaving the Doctor and his ward alone together.

Silent and distrustful, and utterly unlike the happy young girl who was accustomed to greet him with her brightest smile, Doris stood with downcast eyes seemingly intent on studying the colors on her palette.

Now his nephew's fragmentary speech had completely upset Doctor Blake—if I may use the homely simile. He had known for some time that Paul had persistently haunted Doris' studio to the scandal of Mrs. Mack, and his own secret uneasiness. But that matters had gone so far he never dreamed.

Yet, being a brave man, Dr. Blake crushed down his rebellious feelings. He had come on a mission of peace. A little *finesse* might be advisable, for impulsive Doris was not apt to listen patiently when Mrs. Mack, whom she exceedingly disliked, was the topic. Perhaps he had better begin by mentioning the invitation that morning received and accepted for himself and Doris to eat their New Year's dinner with the Marstons. Thus he could lead up to the topic desired by slow degrees.

"I suppose Doris," said the Doctor, breaking an awkward silence, "that—er—Mrs. Mack has told you we are engaged—"

"She has just given me to understand so—yes," coldly interrupted Doris.

This was not encouraging. He would beat about the bush no longer but mention his errand at once.

"As you know, Doris," again began Dr. Blake, nervously clearing his throat, "Mrs. Mack is a most excellent housekeeper, and we—"

Doris' beautiful face, as pale as death, was suddenly turned toward him, checking his further explanation.

"I do not care to listen to a recital of Mrs. Mack's accomplishments or virtues," cried Doris, with a passionate resentment unlike the Doris he knew—"she and I are thoroughly antagonistic. It does not matter though," she said, with a sudden half-paathic change of voice and manner—"we shall not trouble each other in the future. I—I have accepted an offer I received today and shall no longer be dependent on your bounty."

Though stricken to the heart Dr. Blake was too proud to make any sign. He waited a moment for Doris to explain further, but Doris was dumb. Could he have seen her quivering lips he might have known the reason.

"I hope you may be happy in your new life, Doris." It cost Dr. Blake a tremendous effort to say this. Too well he knew the weak will and vacillating purpose of his nephew, who would never succeed in his calling, simply from lack of energy and application. And this was the man who had won his pretty ward!

"Thank you," said Doris, in a low tone. But, as she suddenly lifted her deep, sharp eyes to his own, what was it that, for one brief moment, he fancied he saw in their inscrutable depths?

All the self-repressed passion of his nature rose suddenly to the surface. For the first time in his years of guardianship, Dr. Paul Blake forgot to hold himself in check.

Crossing the space between them with a single stride, Dr. Blake seized both Doris' small hands in his own:

"Doris, my darling—can it be possible?" he exclaimed, in half bewilderment. And his voice, as well as the love-light shining from his eyes, supplied what was lacking of further speech.

A flood of tell-tale crimson suffused the fair girl's brow, cheeks and neck.

"How dare you—I hate you, Dr. Blake," she impetuously cried, in the same breath. And wrenching herself from his detaining grasp, Doris, hiding her hot face in her hands, burst into an agony of weeping.

Well would dismayed Dr. Blake have desired to kiss away her tears, as when Doris was a tiny maiden. But—she hated him; that settled it. Exhaling a sigh, which seemed to come from his boot-soles, the doctor turned, and made his way hastily down-stairs. Doris waited till the echo of his foot-steps had died away; then, drying her eyes on a diminutive handkerchief, she stamped her small foot with considerable energy.

"I am nothing but a young fool," she said, with an unconscious echo of a similar admission on Dr. Blake's part a little before. The adjectives only being changed.

Removing the cloth from the partly-completed portrait, Doris seized her palette and with the ghost of a tender smile on her quivering lips fell to painting with nervous haste.

"I must finish it before New Year's," she said to herself. And resolutely crowding till dinner time.

To her relief Dr. Blake was absent making his professional round. Mrs. Mack glanced at the traces of recent tears on Doris' pale cheek with ill-concealed triumph as the young girl, bending over her palette, made a pretense of eating.

"The Doctor says you're thinking of leaving us," smoothly remarked the widow, after vainly waiting for Doris to break the silence.

"Yes," was the coldly monocyllabic reply. "Well, may be it's for the best," responded Mrs. Mack, steadily eyeing her shrinking victim. "For naturally you don't feel like being beholden to any one longer—you can

help, though as Paul—I mean the Doctor—says he didn't mind the extra expense while he was single with only himself to care for. But now, why—"

Here Mrs. Mack checked herself and coyly dropped her eyes to the table cloth, a corner of which she was plaiting between her fingers in seeming confusion.

"Neither Dr. Blake or yourself need fear being burdened with me much longer," replied Doris, with quiet scorn. And as she rose and left the room, Mrs. Mack smiled unpleasantly.

"One of us will leave, but it won't be Althea Mack," she remarked, in triumphant confidence, to herself. But this remains to be seen.

Slowly the old year dragged his lagging footsteps toward the portal where the New Year child stood impatiently awaiting the departure of his nearly worn-out predecessor. Doris, cold and silent, saw but little of her guardian, who, far graver and more pre-occupied than was his wont, silently noted the frequent comings and goings of his nephew, who as far as possible seemed to shrink from an interview.

Dr. Blake waited from day to day with a vain hope that Doris might come to him with her confidence as in other days. But the young girl painted steadily at the unfinished portrait for which—according to Mrs. Mack—his nephew Paul was "settled," and Dr. Blake never again intruded himself on their presence.

It was the last evening of the old year. Dr. Blake, thoroughly tired out by an unusually hard day's work, was sitting in his office library looking absently into the open



"NOT MISS DORIS, BUT MRS. BLAKE."

fire-place where the flames were dancing a weird measure in fantastic time to the voice of the winder wind in the old-fashioned, wide-mouthed chimney.

Bob, the office boy, stood in a back-ground of shadow awaiting the Doctor's commands for the morrow, vaguely wondering what had come over his usually genial employer of late.

"May be it's as folks says—that Miss Mack's bound to marry him whether he's willin' or not," soliloquized Bob; "and if he's afraid of that, I don't wonder he's down in the mouth."

But all unconscious of his office boy's anxiety in his behalf, Dr. Blake sat with half-closed eyes in the semi-obscurity, for a pinhead of flame from a gas jet at the rear and the blaze of the wood fire itself alone relieved the darkness of the room.

A rustle as of a woman's dress caused the Doctor to give a sudden start! At last Doris had come.

"Dressing of your lady love, doctor?"

Alas the voice, stimulating an ardent desire for foreign to the speaker, was that of Mrs. Mack, who, arrayed as for conquest, advanced in the circle of firelight and carelessly placed a rather shapely foot on the fender.

"Well, yes," was the absent reply. For Dr. Blake, who, in addition to an unusually laborious day, had been up with a dangerous case nearly all the night before, was in that curious state between waking and sleeping, when men see visions and dream dreams, yet are perfectly conscious as to what is going on about them.

Something in Dr. Blake's voice and manner caused the fossil remains of an organ Mrs. Mack was pleased to designate as her heart, to give a dull throb. She had read of masculine hearts caught at the rebound. By this time Dr. Blake knew that his case was hopeless with the child of a girl he had been temporarily infatuated. Should she strike while the iron was hot?

"When Miss Doris and your nephew are married, you and I Doctor will be left quite alone!" said Mrs. Mack, with a tender look, which was entirely lost on the Doctor, who had subsided into his winking slumber. As in a vision he again saw Doris' deep eyes looking into his own with the strange intensity which once before had thrilled him through and through. And, extending his arms, Dr. Blake said aloud:

"My darling—come."

Mrs. Mack saw no vision. The outstretched arms were a joyful reality. So also was the tender invitation; and without an instant of delay she literally fell on the Doctor's neck, about which her arms clasped themselves with considerable tenacity.

"P-Paul," she sobbed, hysterically, "now I shall never leave you—never!" and clung the tighter to the scarcely awakened doctor as Bob, thinking matters had gone quite far enough, suddenly turned up the gas!

Now Doris had chosen that evening to tell her guardian of her future plans. Perhaps, too, she might learn from his own lips that there was some mistake as to his matrimonial intentions.

Her foot was on the library threshold as Bob threw the glow of gaslight on the interesting tableau I have just mentioned. And casting one glance thereat, Doris fled up-stairs to her room. But h. d. she lingered a moment, Doris would have heard Dr. Blake utter something akin to mild profanity, and seen him rise to his feet so suddenly as to nearly precipitate the clinging widow over a hassock!

"Mrs. Mack!" he sternly exclaimed, but the lady, forcibly overcome by a sense of maidenly modesty, had fled.

"And Miss Doris see it all!" said Bob, in audible soliloquy, as he stood staring in a dazed sort of way at the open door.

"Go to bed, Bob," sharply commanded Dr. Blake, in great perturbation of spirit. What could he have said or done in his dreamy abstraction that Mrs. Mack, who was the pink of propriety, should have thrown herself into his arms? Good Heavens, what a terrible situation! Come what might he

would see Doris the first thing in the morning and explain it.

When a couple of hours after sunrise Dr. Blake opened his heavy eyes on New Year's morn, they rested at once on a framed portrait hanging against the opposite wall. Where had it come from. Who was it intended for?

For a closer view showed the Doctor that the general contour of the features were his own. So also was the blonde mustache, but here to his own mind the resemblance ceased. The likeness between himself and his nephew Paul had often been commented on. This picture might have been Paul with twenty years added to his age, or himself with ten subtracted.

With a sad smile Doctor Blake read the inscription on a card pinned on the frame. A New Year's gift for my ("dear" erased) guardian from his ("affectionate" erased) ward.

"It is plain that Doris' forte is not portrait painting," he said, with a very audible sigh. And then wondering how he should introduce the awkward explanation he was meaning to make, the doctor went down to breakfast.

Replying rather curtly to Mrs. Mack's affectionate New Year's greeting, Dr. Blake looked about the room.

"Miss Doris not down yet?" he said, with affected carelessness.

Mrs. Mack drew herself up primly. "Sarah tells me, Doctor, that at sunrise this morning she let Miss Doris out at the front door fully dressed for traveling and carrying a large hand satchel. She gave no explanation, but simply said she was going away for good, and in due time would write us. And from the fact that our milkman saw Mr. Paul Blake with a young lady who exactly answers her description getting into the Boston train at 6:45, I incline to the opinion that they have gone off to get married."

Dr. Blake, who had himself well in hand, made no audible comment on this surprising bit of news, which in reality was the final blow to his vague hopes. And Mrs. Mack, tucking a tiny, tear-blotted note addressed to Dr. Paul Blake a little further down in her pocket, noted with inward satisfaction that his appetite appeared in no way impaired by what he had heard.

"We will have a talk when I come in from my call, Mrs. Mack," he said, with his usual courtesy; but the widow thought she detected an undertone of warmth in his speech, and her hopes ran higher than ever.

Bob was waiting the doctor's appearance in the office with manifest impatience. It was evident that he had nerved himself up to the fulfillment of some important duty, regardless of consequences.

"Look here, Doctor," he said, in a cautious undertone, the moment Dr. Blake had closed the door behind him; "there's things that's got to be said, whether you think I'm interfering with what's none of my business or not. First and foremost, you've let Miss Mack drive Miss Doris away from the house—"

"Nothing of the sort, Bob," sharply interrupted Dr. Blake. "Miss Doris has—has run off with my nephew, Paul, to be married."

"Begg'n' your pardon, but she ain't," coolly returned Bob, who was nothing if not blunt spoken. "Mr. Paul's been an' 'loped with Judge Haynes' daughter, which ain't only eighteen years old, and the Judge is jest wild about it; every body's talkin' of it down-town."

Dr. Blake fell into the nearest chair and sat staring speechlessly at Bob, who, with great inward gusto, went on:

"Seems he told Miss Doris all about it, and she tried to get him off the notion, but twasn't no use. So he'n Miss Haynes has gone off to Boston to get married, and Miss Doris she's took the train to Portland, where she's had a offer for to teach music and drawin' in the Presbyterian Institute."

"How do you know all this, Bob?" hoarsely demanded Doctor Blake, feeling as though every thing was slipping from under his feet.

"Didn't Miss Doris tell me last night when she got me to hang your pocket in your bed-room on the sly, and she crying like her heart was a-breaking?" boldly returned Bob; "and didn't she say she hadn't no home here any longer, now that you was goin' to marry Mrs. Mack? But I've writ a note that'll explain it all, she says, and Doctor Blake'll find it under his plate in the morning—"

"Doctor Blake did not wait for further explanations. Ten minutes later he had left the house, caught the 9:15 express for Portland, and reached there by 11 a. m.

Dressed in her best, Mrs. Mack sat in the parlor New Year's night impatiently awaiting Dr. Blake's coming. She knew that he had been invited to dine out, and his prolonged absence did not surprise her. So absorbed was Mrs. Mack in a pleasant day dream that she did not notice the arrival and departure of a hack which had deposited a gentleman and lady at the door. That the gentleman was Dr. Blake was evident by the fact that he let himself and his companion in with a night key. Who the lady might be is probably apparent to the dullest comprehension.

Still taken up with her castle building the widow, blissfully unconscious of impending ruin, turned her head languidly as the door opened.

"Dr. Blake—and Miss Doris."

This was the startled exclamation which fell from the widow's lips as she sprang to her feet.

"Not Miss Doris, but Mrs. Blake," said the doctor, with freezing politeness. "We were married in Portland this afternoon. And"—before Mrs. Mack could scream—"let me add that as you see I have made my choice as to which of you two should remain under my roof, I shall have to request you to take your departure at the earliest opportunity—perhaps you can guess why."

Mrs. Mack gasped, but nothing came of it. Though speechless with baffled rage and shame she hurried out of the room banging the door behind her till every pane of glass rattled.

But an earthquake would not have disturbed the happiness of the newly-married couple who sat side by side in front of the cheerful blaze.

"If I were not quite so young," said Doris, a little regretfully, in a pause of the conversation after the mutual explanations had all been gone over again.

"If I were not quite so old," said the Doctor, with a quiet smile.

"Old," was the indignant response. "Does the picture I painted of you look old?"

"Why, no," said Dr. Blake, laughing; "on the contrary, it flatters my years grossly."

"But that is the way you look to me," whispered Doris. And that is all.

FRANK H. CONVERSE.

CONTAGIOUS DISEASES.

What Sanitation Can Do Toward Preventing the Outbreak of Epidemics.

The Sanitarian of the present day makes no less claim for his art than that it is capable of preventing the occurrence of disease in a very great degree, and where it can not accomplish this, it so diminishes the number and fatality of cases as almost to banish epidemics. We are sometimes met with the assertion that there are many of the communicable diseases that arise independent of insanitary conditions, and therefore this defense against them is only partial or inconsiderable.

The first reply to this is that there is reason to believe that most of the communicable diseases that now arise from contagion were originally produced by insanitary conditions. The more we look into the history of epidemics the more it is found that the first recognition of the disease has been amid the most insanitary surroundings. The plague began amid scenes of squalid wretchedness. Typhus and typhoid fevers have their beginning and their chief residences in the foulest localities. Cholera had its beginning amid the crowded pilgrimages along the Ganges. Yellow fever is claimed by many to have been born on African ships and to be a mongrel formed from the jungle fever of Africa and the ship fever of foul holds. Scarlet fever is so intensified by proximity to slaughter-houses and accumulations of foul animal matter that it has been claimed to originate therefrom. Diphtheria in its origin has been distinctly traced to a foul system of dealing with stored human odor.

While after a disease has secured such a type as to become practically a new and permanent disease it is generally first introduced into a locality by contagion, this does not prove that its very first existence was not dependent on filth.

But a still more important and practical point, for the present, in the actual management of diseases is, that those diseases which now mostly occur from a previous case depend for their number and malignancy on the insanitary conditions which they find. Like all plants and all animals, they seek the places where they can find the best, or where their existence is not imperiled. It is well known that these low forms of vegetable life which seemed to be identified with disease flourish best amid foul air and the products of decay. The power of air and ventilation is such that these forms wither and quickly perish. It has been proved that in a well-ventilated and clean room scarlet fever is not transmissible ten feet. There is good reason to believe that most of the contagia perish upon free exposure to pure oxygen. The fact of contagion often points to some artificial mode of preservation of the virus. Where every advantage is taken in the line of cleanliness and of complete purification of the air we are constantly finding that our control of epidemics is complete. We do not always prevent individual cases, but we do prevent epidemics.

There is such a thing in sanitation as removing the combustible material and even of making the building fire-proof. This does not banish fire but it does make it inoperative for the purposes of general conflagration. Just so sanitary art may not destroy every micro-organism, but the free air will put out many a spark and cause many another one to light on surroundings or on persons where no blaze will occur. Depend upon it our power to put out many diseases or to prevent their spread and even to render them only a slight scorch to those on whom they fall, is fully equal to our modern methods of preventing destruction or damage by fire. But we must be ready beforehand. We must deal with the locality in advance. We must make persons and places disease-proof. If, as is often the case, we fail to do so completely we must so far succeed as that we restrain. We must also be ready with all our appliances in advance to meet and limit attack. Where we find cities that have adopted this plan we have a life-saving brigade as effectual in that direction as ever has been a fire brigade to prevent or restrain fire. We are constantly accumulating evidence that many diseases are within the range and duty of human control. This duty devolves mostly and depends mostly on thorough sanitary administration. It is to this, supplemented by prompt treatment, that we are to trust for that control over pestilential diseases which will enable us to meet them at their first approach, and to have them not find ready places for development. This is the method already begun and which already records the most satisfactory results.—N. Y. Independent.

—Narrow streets are best for people of bad habits. When a man has to walk home on both sides of a very wide street it takes all night to get there.—Pittsburg.



BEFORE IT HOLDING PALETTE AND MASH-STICK.

a scathing remark. But in comparison with his nephew, Paul Blake, the doctor regarded himself as a modern Methuselah.

Doris' fame's "study'er" was a rather cosy interior formed by parting a portion of the attic proper with some faded chintz curtains rummaged out from the big cedar-wood chest in the corner. One of the hangings was pushed back for a better side light, and Dr. Blake, who had sought the studio with a view of reconciling Doris and Mrs. Mack, stood still at the head of the stairs regarding the chintz-framed picture before him.

Under the sky-light in the roof was an easel supporting a partly-finished portrait