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Christmas Parcel for Miss Melinda Package Did Not Contain Expected Ring, but She Became Engaged.

By MARION R. REAGAN
MISS MELINDA BROWN, spinster, had been waiting all year for Peter Moffat to propose. In fact, ever since they had met some two years before, she had felt that

Peter could be brought around to take the "big plunge" with her into the sea of matrimony, but things had not gone on so well as she could have hoped. She was sure Peter loved her, but he was an extremely shy man and it required no little pushing to get him up to the point. Several times Melinda thought she "had" him. She had given him every opening by referring coyly to her "own little home—if she ever had one," and to her "lonely life at present," but Peter only sat silent at such remarks, ignoring them completely, or stupidly telling her that after all, many people led more lonely lives than she, and not to be so discontented. Melinda looked forward to the approaching Christmas season with glee. Surely he would give her a ring for Christmas, after these months of courting. The season advanced and Christmas arrived bringing a parcel from Mr. Moffat and a note sent from Chicago. Melinda's heart sank when she saw the postmark. "Out of town for Christmas. Then it is all off," she said sadly. She glanced at the package—ten inches square—surely no engagement ring in that. Slowly she untied it. It was writing paper. She opened the letter from him and read: "Just a Christmas greeting, hoping you will write to me frequently. I shall be in Chicago for several months. Sincerely,
 "PETER MOFFAT."

Furious, Melinda tore the note into bits. "I shall never look at him again," she breathed. "And after the way I've run after him! But that's been the trouble. I've run after him too much. I shall never write to him. From this out I shall never speak to him again—never speak to him again!" she repeated emphatically. And Melinda kept her word. Peter Moffat was growing a little uneasy. Three months had passed and no word from Melinda. It finally became too much even for the patient Mr. Moffat. He felt his temper rising steadily against Melinda. "Thinks she can play a game like that, eh? Run after me while I'm in town and then drop me when I go away. Probably after some other man now." This thought brought crimson flashes of jealousy to the already highly colored cheeks of Peter Moffat. "By George, no woman will make a fool out of me!" he exploded. "I'll go to Springfield tonight and I'll make her marry me. After all these months of courting her, too!"

It so happened that Melinda's cousin, Arthur, who had come from Kansas City was having dinner with her at the hotel the night Peter Moffat came in from Chicago. Peter was hurrying down the street from the station when he happened to look in at the brightly lighted restaurant of the hotel and there—what? He stopped dead still, the evil green monster rising in his breast. It was Melinda with another man! His first impulse was to rush into the hotel, punch this impertinent stranger and carry Melinda off with him. But this shyness was stronger than his passion and he only turned away, grinding his teeth and clenching his fists. He would see Melinda in the morning at her house! The next morning about nine o'clock Melinda was surprised to see Peter Moffat at her door. She began to tremble nervously. "Good morning, Peter," she said to him, and extended a cold, moist hand. Peter grunted. "I've come to talk to you, Melinda," he said very seriously indeed, and closed the door behind him. They sat in the little parlor of the Brown house. "You haven't been playing a straight game with me, Melinda," he began. "I know all about it—you needn't try to explain. I saw you last night, and I've seen you other nights. You have only been using me as a plaything while you've had these other fellows on the side."

"Merry Christmas, Happy New Year!" By Ellis Parker Butler, —in St. Nicholas

LITTLE called Rastus come eekippin' down the street, A-smilin' an' a-griinin' at every one he meet; My, oh! he was happy! Boy! but he was gay! Winkin' "Merry Christmas" an' "Happy New-Year's Day!" Winkin' that his wishes might every one come true— And—bless your dear heart, honey,—I wish the same to you!

In Arthur, who had come from Kansas City was having dinner with her at the hotel the night Peter Moffat came in from Chicago. Peter was hurrying down the street from the station when he happened to look in at the brightly lighted restaurant of the hotel and there—what? He stopped dead still, the evil green monster rising in his breast. It was Melinda with another man! His first impulse was to rush into the hotel, punch this impertinent stranger and carry Melinda off with him. But this shyness was stronger than his passion and he only turned away, grinding his teeth and clenching his fists. He would see Melinda in the morning at her house! The next morning about nine o'clock Melinda was surprised to see Peter Moffat at her door. She began to tremble nervously. "Good morning, Peter," she said to him, and extended a cold, moist hand. Peter grunted. "I've come to talk to you, Melinda," he said very seriously indeed, and closed the door behind him. They sat in the little parlor of the Brown house. "You haven't been playing a straight game with me, Melinda," he began. "I know all about it—you needn't try to explain. I saw you last night, and I've seen you other nights. You have only been using me as a plaything while you've had these other fellows on the side."

Melinda gasped. "Why Peter Moffat, you—you"—she could think of nothing to say. "I know all about it," he repeated; "I've been watching you. Now all I've got to say is that I'm not a man to be trifled with. Either you marry me at once or you never will see me again. I want an answer right now, yes or no." Melinda felt as though she had been suddenly hurled into an avalanche. She could not understand what had gotten into Peter, or what he was referring to. She did know, however, with an ecstatic sense of delight that he was proposing. "I'll marry you whenever you say, Peter," she said meekly. Peter, feeling greatly triumphant, leaned over and kissed his future wife tenderly. "We'll be married tomorrow," he said.

Delayed Appreciation
 It's difficult for youth to reckon with The generous joys that make the pulses throb. Some day they learn that Santa is a myth And that old father dear was on the job.

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