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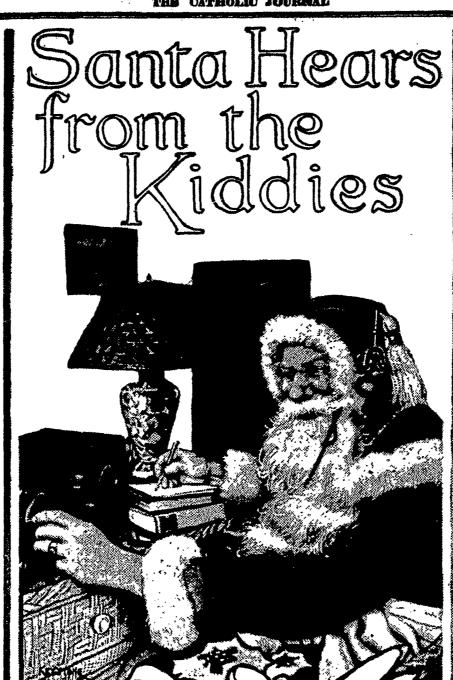
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Christmas Parcel for Miss Melinda

Package Did Not Contain Expected Ring, but She Became Engaged.

By MARION R. REAGAN ISS MELINDA BROWN, spinster, all year for Peter 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 Barometers to her "own little

home-if she ever had one," and to Thermometers 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 Christ

mas, 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 ou 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. Mossat. He selt 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 fiashes of lealousy to the already highly colored cheeks of Peter Moffat. By George, no woman will make a fool out of me!" he exploded. "Til 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 cous-

'Merry Christmas, Happy New Year! By Ellis Parker Butler,

TITTLE cullud Rastus come e-skips

had been waiting Wishin' that his wishes might every one

Monat to propose. And bless your dear heart, honey, I wish

in, Arthur, who had come from Kansas City was having dinner with her at the hotel the night Peter Mossat came in from Chicago. Peter was hurrying down the street from the station when he happened to look in at the 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 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 noth-

"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

Melinda felt as though she had been suddenly hurled into an avalanche. She could not understand what had goiten into Peter, or what he was referring to. She did know, however, with an ecstatic sense of delight that

he was proposing. "Til 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 tomor-

row," he said. (@, 1925, Western Newspaper Union.)

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