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## CICELY'S CHRISTMAS.



"A fruit-knife next fell a sacrifice, and two pairs of scissors were lamed for life."

THE queen-city, radiant with life, noisy with mirth and light, gay with decorations, and fragrant with spicy odors, sat enthroned on Manhattan Island, a great river on either hand, an ocean at her feet, and at her back a whole nation of tributary towns and villages ready to do her honor, and uphold her supremacy over the wide American Continent against all envious rivals. It was Christmas-eve, and the queen wore her holiday robes. New-fallen snow covered the pavements, evergreen trees made groves of the provision-stores, cone-laden boughs formed arbors over the long lines of plump turkeys, each bearing its sacrificial green sprig; graceful wreaths of running-pine clambered over the gift-books and framed the glowing paintings, laurel shone on the marble statuettes, holly gleamed among the jewels, and in the windows of the toy-shops stood royal Christmas-trees, glittering with lights and covered with glorified wonders so bewilderingly beautiful that the crowd of little faces outside was struck speechless with admiration. The sun was setting; with his ruddy face hidden by a bank of snow-clouds, he sent a flood of golden light over the house-tops and lit up all the western windows to do honor to Christmas-eve. This aerial illumination took the inhabitants of the queen-city by surprise. The day had been dark with thick-falling snow-flakes, and the night had come down rapidly, as though in answer to the wishes of all the waiting children on the island. Lights glittered in the crowded stores, and "Please, mamma, light the gas; it will make Christmas come quicker," had been pleaded in so many houses by earnest little voices, that mammas had yielded, and the chandeliers threw their light out over the snow through the curtained windows many minutes before the customary time, so that when King Sol sent up his fireworks, there was a double illumination all over the city.

But the gas could not rival the sky tints. First came the golden beams glittering against the windows, shining on the lofty roofs, and lighting up the gilt cross on St. Bonté's slender spire until it shone

against the dark sky like a star. Then a vivid rose hue stole up to the zenith, and hurrying people paused to look at the warm light on the marble *façades* and the red glow over the snow. Dying off into a soft pink, the flush sank down to the west, dropping from cloud to cloud, and, fading away into the clear, pale yellow on the horizon, which, itself changing from yellow to purple, from purple to blue, and from blue to gray, gradually darkened into the sombre night.

Among the busy throng, two persons were walking side by side, apparently not themselves hurried, but forced to join in the quick pace of the moving crowd, sweeping up Broadway like an endless gala procession; round the corner to the left, the ranks still unbroken, past haughty windows wherein lay rich merchandise in careless heaps, and on to Aladdin's Palace, where gold, pearls, rubies, emeralds, and diamonds, were shining, shimmering, glowing, gleaming, and sparkling, on their white velvet beds.

"O Seth, let us go in for a moment!" exclaimed Cicely, her brown eyes as bright as the jewels she admired.

Tall Seth glanced over her head, scanned the display with an indifferent gaze, and answered:

"Do you really care for those stones, Cicely?"

"They are diamonds, Seth—real royal diamonds. See those rings, that necklace, and oh, see those fringed ear-rings! How they sparkle! They must be worth thousands of dollars," murmured Cicely, in tones of awe.

They entered the palace and joined the crowd of gazers around the glass cases, Cicely flushed with excited interest, and Seth looking with amused glances, not at the jewels, but at his pretty companion. After a tour among the wonders, they secured a place at the diamond-counter, where the shining gems, pure and self-radiant as liquid light, gladdened all hearts with their beauty. At least, so Cicely said, as she gazed, lost in an ecstasy of admiration.

"Those crosses, Seth, and that diamond bird! Look at the yellow



gleam of this *solitaire*, and see the white light in that pin. And, O Seth, some more fringed ear-rings, like those in the window, but even more beautiful, if that is possible;" and Cicely heaved a little sigh. Her companion stood beside her, but after a time these raptures fell upon an unlistening ear. Honest Seth had no eye for jewels, and his mind, full of engrossing thoughts, had wandered far from the scene, as he stood with one strong hand resting on the counter, lost in abstraction. So Cicely discovered him, as, after pursuing her monologue for some time, she withdrew her eyes from the treasures and looked up for a response.

Cicely Wild was charmingly pretty, with the dark shadows and ripe tints of brown beauty, a type as essentially peculiar as the blond, and so-called brunette. Brown eyes, brown hair, brown skin, and a round little figure, even Seth Austin, practical machinist as he was, expanded into poetry in her presence, calling her his dear little "nut-brown mayde." Poor and orphaned, well educated and energetic, the young girl belonged to the great army of teachers, and, bravely leaving the district-school on the hill and the lonely farmhouse in the valley, she had come to the great city, where, if the work was twice as hard, the pay was also doubled, and life ten times as bright to the active young mind. But little Cicely did not venture into the crowded metropolis entirely unfriended; the playmate of her childhood, the friend of her girlhood, and the lover of her maturer years, was there before her, working hard in the great Columbian Iron Works, where the wonderful engines of the ocean-steamers were formed, amid the noise of bewildering and ponderous machinery. Seth Austin, born and bred in the country town of Plum Valley, had educated himself, studied mechanics, journeyed to New York, and obtained a place in the Columbian Iron Works, no one exactly knew how; himself least of all. Some men are born with their calling written by the finger of Nature upon their brows. Most of us plod on in whatever vocation our parents or chance select for us, and we are lawyers, physicians, or merchants, as it may happen, without any strong or importunate preference on our part. But now and then Nature gives us a lesson in phrenology, sending a musician, a painter, or an inventor into the world, so plainly marked that he who runs may read. If the parents of the child of sounds are deaf to his capabilities and persist in making him a carpenter, how many hours will he steal from his uncongenial toil, trying to fashion rude pipes from the reeds by the river! If the parents of the child of hues are blind to his powers and persist in making him a baker, how will he slip away to mix his primitive colors; how will he make the fences his canvas, and paint the very loaves in the oven! Seth Austin was endowed with one of those rare brains in whose sight the principles and evolutions of machinery are clear as the sunlight. Having no one to interfere with the bent of his inclinations, he had migrated from the water-wheels and blacksmith-shop of Plum Valley to the Columbian Iron Works with the certainty of a needle pointing to its pole; and there, although occupied with hands and mind all day, he still found time at night to weave his own ideas and make his own experiments upon the great laws which, even in the nineteenth century, are not yet wholly understood. From his childhood he had loved Cicely Wild, the one love of his life, and never had his fancy so much as glanced in another direction from the days when they both attended the old red school on the hill, and shared their apples and gingerbread. Before he left the village he had won from the "nut-brown mayde" the promise to be his wife as soon as Fortune should smile even faintly upon him; and when, in one of his brief letters he suggested the idea of her coming to New York, the little school-mistress was eagerly glad to desert the quiet village, delighted with the gay city, proud of her new position in the thronged school, and happy in the frequent presence of her lover, albeit she found him, at times, strangely absent-minded.

But Cicely had come to the city in the early fall, and now that four months had passed in the daily routine of teaching, a dull fatigue had darkened her brain, weakened her body, and clouded her heart; her slender ankles ached with climbing endless stairs, her little wrists trembled under the weight of heavy books, and her mind grew wearied with the strict rules, equally severe for teacher as scholar. In the kindness of his heart, Seth had taken pains to find a home for the country girl in a fashionable boarding-house, where, perched in a sky-parlor, six feet by nine, she was at liberty to fly down and eat at the same table with the Misses Van Airytop, lost in wonder over their magnificent and multitudinous costumes. Occasionally, the evenings

were brightened by a visit from Seth, but the young man's time was so fully occupied and his brain so filled with his own plans, that often for days he did not come, and sometimes, even when present in body, his mind would wander away to his models, as vexed little Cicely would soon discover, doing her best, too, poor child, to entertain him in a corner of the well-filled drawing-room. One Sunday evening, coming from church, she vouchsafed but curt answers and chill remarks, until a turn in the street brought the boarding-house into view; then, in a torrent, her vexation and unhappiness burst forth, and she swept over the unsuspecting Seth in a storm of tearful words.

"You do not care for me; you do not love me any more! Why not be honest and say so? Sitting there evening after evening and hour after hour without saying one word! And, besides, you never come but once in two weeks, and never stay more than ten minutes when you do come. The other night, when I was speaking of Nilsson, you did not hear one word I said; and, when I asked you how old she was, you said 'about eighty, I believe;' and Miss Van Airytop laughed. It was all a mistake, my coming to New York. I wish I had stayed in Plum Valley. I wish I had never seen you, and I don't think I want to live any longer. I should like to die and be buried," sobbed the "nut-brown mayde," in doleful despair.

When the astonished Seth had recovered his breath, he burst forth in rapid phrases: "My own Cicely, is it possible such trifles have troubled you? Do you not see that my mind is hourly filled with plans to hasten the day when I can place you in a home of our own? All my thoughts, all my labors, are for you, dear, and your love is all I live for in the world! I do not care for conventional sentences uttered within the hearing of idle strangers, but I come to the house to look at my darling, and go away strengthened for the battle going on, day and night, between me and Fate. You can have no idea how hard is the contest; but it is all for the home, and the home, dear, is you."

Another week had passed, and Christmas was close at hand. The city was gay with holiday gifts and holiday people, and the very air seemed rich and hospitable. Cicely, full of excitement, laid her plans for the day with careful precision, altering them regularly every night before falling asleep, and writing spasmodic little notes to Seth every morning to inform him of the last important change in her programme. One evening, one precious evening, the two had the drawing-room all to themselves; the Van Airytops and retinue were at Booth's Theatre, the Deepdowner family had gone to the Philharmonic Concert, and the Misses Ecclesias were attending rehearsal at St. Bonté's.

"Isn't this delightful?" exclaimed Cicely, as she danced into the room; "we are alone, you can stay all the evening, and I will show you my final programme for Christmas-day." They seated themselves, and the little lady had no cause to complain of an inattentive listener as she talked on happily for many minutes. At length, drawing a roll of paper from her pocket, she said: "This, Seth, is the programme. It begins at noon on Christmas-eve. Our holidays commence at exactly the same hour; isn't that delightful?—O Seth! how could you? Suppose Priscilla Ann should see you?"

"Would she crush me at one fell blow?"

"Nonsense, sir! But, really, you must be careful, for Priscilla Ann is an important person, and her ideas of propriety are stern as Plymouth Rock. Listen now to the

#### "PROGRAMME."

"FOR CHRISTMAS EVE.—Walk on Broadway from four to five; dine at the Silver Restaurant (lobster salad, omelette soufflé, Neapolitan cream, and plum-cake); attend the rehearsal at St. Bonté's.

"FOR CHRISTMAS-DAY.—Meet at the corner at ten A.M. exactly; attend service at St. Bonté's; lunch at the Golden Restaurant (relais, fruit and candies); in the afternoon the 'Pantomime' at Mallo's; dine at the Diamond Restaurant (*pâté de foie gras, meringue glacée, and plum-pudding*); in the evening attend Booth's Theatre, and buy a bouquet.

"(Signed)

"CICELY WILD."

"Excellent, excellent!" applauded Seth; "but could you not allow me a small portion of meat, and one or two potatoes, dear?"

"Never. For once, at least, you shall eat Elysian food. Sign your name, sir!"

"I must go, now," said the young man, as he traced a bold "Seth Austin" beside the delicate "Cicely Wild."

"There's one seat too many," he said.

"I set it there, brother," said Uncle John, tranquilly.

"For whom, brother? Have you invited some friend?"

"No, brother, I thought of our Edmund."

The old book-keeper looked wistfully at his brother, and then went and held out his hand to him.

"Thank you, brother," he said, in a low voice, returning to his seat.

When the first pang had passed, it seemed a satisfaction to old Joe to gaze at the vacant chair, and to think of his son as present and enjoying their happiness. And when at last the dessert came, and the wine was poured out, the old man looked toward the vacant chair as he raised the glass to his lips.

Suddenly the voice of Daisy rang out, half choked with laughter:

"Why, we are forgetting our tree!" she cried; "we are really losing sight of our tree, uncle dear. Did anybody ever!"

And, not waiting for "anybody" to reply, Daisy started up, and, assisted by Uncle John, bore the magical cedar in its neat box, covered with evergreens, to the centre of the table.

Night had come now, and the tapers on the tree were lit. As the fairy spectacle of many-colored baskets, candy cornucopias, and presents of needle-work, and books, and garlands, flashed forth in the light of the tapers—as this splendid Christmas-tree burst forth on the eyes of all—the young Darlings uttered a suppressed cheer, and "Pet," in curls and a pinafore, made a reckless and desperate attempt to climb upon the board and carry the prize at the point of his baby-spoon.

"No, Pet!" cried Daisy, "wait till sister gives you yours! But first, Uncle John is going to tell a beautiful story! Will you listen, father dear, and mother? It is lovely!"

The rush of laughter in the voice made all look at Daisy. Why did the child's cheeks flush so, and why that dazzling light in her eyes?

But now Uncle John suddenly riveted everybody's attention. For the moment he was the centre of excited interest for the whole Darling family. He seemed to feel the responsibility resting upon him. He reflected for a moment—smiled dreamily; thrummed on the table—and then began:

"The tale I am going to relate, my dear young friends," said Uncle John, "I must first inform you, is strictly true in every particular. It was written down by the King of the Genii, and then caught up in the beak of a great bird called a roc—and the Prince Camaralzaman, having been shipwrecked on a desert island where the bird came to feed, killed the roc, and the story has been in the palace of Bagdad, where the prince lived, ever since."

At this commencement, the young Darlings exhibited an astounded interest. As to Pet, his excitement was beyond the power of words. His eyes resembled two saucers—his mouth opened to its utmost width—and, in the excess of his attention, he very nearly swallowed his baby-spoon. No one looked at Daisy. With one hand shading her eyes from the light, and the other placed upon her breast, she looked at Uncle John, or furtively toward her father.

Uncle John continued:

"Having told you, my dear children, how the story came to be known, I will next proceed to relate it for your entertainment:

"There once lived in the city of Bagdad an old merchant whose name was Barilzac, which, being translated, is Worthy-man. He had a clerk named Abou-ben-darling—not unlike the name of our own family—and for a long time Abou-ben-darling served the good merchant Barilzac, whose caravans brought to Bagdad all the treasures of the East. But misfortune came. The caravans were overwhelmed in the sands of the desert. The moment was near when Barilzac would probably be compelled to strew dust upon his head, and wander through the streets of Bagdad, crying, 'Barilzac, the merchant, is ruined!'

"This happened," continued Uncle John, "just before the great festivity which comes on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Snows. Abou-ben-darling came home that day, thinking of the misfortunes of his patron, and also of a great suffering of his own—for all of us must suffer, my children. His only son had been lost at sea, and the heart of Abou-ben-darling was sad. He returned to hold the festivity of the cedar-tree, but his heart felt heavy. 'Abou-ben-darling is miserable!' he said, 'there is no man more miserable!'

"As he thus spoke, his daughter Paribanou approached him.

The name Paribanou, my children, signifies the Flower of the Daisy. She came now to Abou-ben-darling, and, kissing him in the Eastern manner, said: 'O father dear! O Abou-ben-darling! do not despair! Behold, the feast is set, and the holy cedar-tree blazes; the tapers therein shine like stars, and many gifts hang down from the boughs of the wondrous tree!'

Here Pet suddenly burst forth—"Why, it's like *our* tree!" he cried; only he left out the *r* in "tree."

"Silence, Pet! do not interrupt!" said Uncle John. "I continue: Abou-ben-darling sighed when his daughter thus spoke.

"'Truly, Flower of the Daisy,' he said, 'thy cedar-tree shines; but my heart is dark, and there is no gift thereon for me.'

"'There is a gift for our father,' said Paribanou, or Flower of the Daisy; and, as she spoke, there was a curious, hidden laughter in her voice. 'There is a gift that our father will value more than all else—a package with his name on it, from a distant land.'

They did not look at Daisy, who was trembling, and whose hand scarce possessed strength to draw a letter from her bosom.

Uncle John continued:

"And Abou-ben-darling said: 'Where is this package, my child?' to which the Flower of the Daisy replied:

"'Father dear, it is here! See, I take it from the boughs of the holy cedar-tree, and give it to you!'

As Uncle John uttered the words, Daisy sprang forward with a letter in her hand.

"Here it is, father dear!" she cried, bursting into tears and laughter. "It nearly killed me not to tell you! Oh, take it, take it! Our Edmund is not dead!"

And, throwing her arms around old Joe's neck, she sobbed upon his bosom, while, with eyes full of wonder, he read the letter from his son. As he read on, he seemed to doubt whether he was reading a real letter. His eyes closed; he uttered a sigh, and would have fainted, had not Uncle John caught him in his arms.

The letter was written to Daisy by her brother Edmund. He had been picked up in the Pacific and carried to the South Seas by a trading-vessel—thence he had worked his way to California—encountered Charles Worthington roaming about in the gold region—they had speculated there and made great fortunes—and were coming home in the next steamer. That was the letter.

As old Joe grew faint, Pet suddenly ran behind his mother's apron, uttering an appalling scream.

At the door stood a tall young man, with a ferocious beard.

"How are you, father and mother, and uncle, and Daisy?"

They ran into his arms, uttering cries and sobs. The sailor was home again, never to leave them more; and, as Daisy rested in her dear brother's arms, with her rosy cheek upon his breast, she said, laughing and crying:

"Father dear! how do you like your Christmas-gift?"

The windows shook as she spoke—it was doubtless the merry goblins highly-pleased with themselves and everybody else; and the holy night, the happy blessed night, went on its way full of joy and gratitude.

A year afterward—strange to say—Christmas came again and saw the house of Worthington Brothers prosperous, and old Joe happy, and Charles the husband of the Flower of the Daisy. And again the cedar-tree was lit, and spread around its cheerful light, and the loud wind laughed, and the merry goblins seemed to shout:

"A merry, merry Christmas!"

JOHN ESTEN COOK.

## TRADITIONS OF THE CROSS.

THE trees of Palestine are chiefly the olive, fig, orange, and pomegranate, and it is probable that the cross on which Jesus suffered was made from one of the two last named. The fig and olive are not likely to have been used for the crucifixion, on account of their value. An Arab or Jew who possesses an olive, or a couple of fig-trees, with a patch of ground in one of the valleys in the neighborhood of Jerusalem or Bethlehem, forty or fifty feet square, and a camel, is accounted well off. There has been little or no change for the last eighteen hundred years in the appearance, circumstances, and manner of life of these people, and the values of to-day are likely not far from those of the time of Christ. The olives and the figs are

so æsthetic! Let me advise you to go there to-morrow, Miss Wild."

Some time afterward, in speaking of Christmas presents, Mr. de Volage said, meaningly:

"You admire diamonds, Miss Wild?"

Cicely confessed the admiration.

"Pretty stones, truly; and Aladdin has some fair specimens—that is, fair for America. The ear-rings especially are quite tasteful."

"Fringed?" inquired Cicely, eagerly.

"Ah, yes—as you say, fringed. For my part, I consider diamonds the only appropriate gift from a gentleman to a lady. Crystallized flowers, delicate trifles, more enduring than the real blossoms, fitting ornaments for flower-like faces. Did you notice any necklaces or tiaras that pleased your fancy, Miss Wild?"

"I was particularly attracted by the ear-rings."

"Ah, yes—as you say, ear-rings. A pendent gem from the shell-like ear of beauty no doubt enhances the starry gleam of the eyes. As Tennyson says—

'And she is grown so dear, so dear,  
That I would be the jewel  
That trembles at her ear.'

I hope Tennyson is your favorite poet, Miss Wild?"

And so the conversation rippled on, in matter nothing, in manner much, until the sound of a carriage at the door roused Cicely to a realization of the hour.

"It is after eleven," she said, rising; "I must go," and, escaping up the staircase, she heard the voluminous rustle of Miss Van Airytop's robes—Wilhelmina Van Airytop, the tall blonde with the aquiline nose and pale-blue eyes, whom she especially dreaded.

Christmas-morning and bright sunshine, with just enough clear crispness in the air to keep the snow from melting; could any one ask more? Little Cicely thought not, as she ran up-stairs after an early solitary breakfast, to prepare for the long day of pleasure opening in a rosy vista before her. A knock at the door announced the severe features of Priscilla Ann, with wiry hand below thrusting in a note. "The young man waits for an answer," said this grim damsel, eying with grave disapproval the drooping plume on Cicely's little hat.

But Miss Wild for once remained untouched by Priscilla's glances. With swelling heart she read the following lines, hastily written in pencil on a leaf torn from a note-book:

"DEAR CICELY: I am grieved to disappoint you, but unexpected business will detain me all day. Hope to see you this evening and bring good news. In haste,  
SETH."

From the rosy summit of hope, down dropped Cicely to the depths of angry despair. After a moment's hesitation, she wrote the following words in reply:

"MR. S. AUSTIN—DEAR SIR: After such a Christmas greeting, I feel disposed to express what has long been in my mind—we are not suited to each other! From henceforth, consider yourself free. Any thing you have to say had best be written. Farewell forever!  
CICELY WILD."

After dispatching this fierce missive by the hand of the inflexible Priscilla, Cicely sat down to take breath. Anger flushed her cheeks, shone in her eyes, and beat rapidly in her pulses. A crowd of thoughts filled her mind, and wounded pride swelled her heart.

"After my long anticipation, my plans, and the open delight I manifested only last evening, to be so carelessly thrust aside!" she mused, with bitter feelings. "Seth has changed; there can be no doubt of that. For two months, at least, I have noticed how absent-minded and abstracted he was, evidently thinking of some one else! Who can it be? Not that it is of the slightest consequence to me, not the least; but, whoever she is, I hope she understands steam-engines, and takes pleasure in being trodden down to the very dust!"

As the last thought called up a vision to Cicely's mind, she rapidly transferred it to paper.

"Very tall shall you be, miss, and bony," said the nut-brown mayde, apostrophizing her unknown rival; "high-shouldered, leathery, and tough. A roman nose, my lady; spectacles, and a high, beetling forehead, with plenty of room for your steam-engine knowledge. Long, flat gaiters, lisle-thread gloves, a water-proof cloak, and an um-

brella, shall complete your outfit, my dear, and I hope you feel ready to be trodden down to the very dust."

Some time being required to finish this sketch, the first flush of anger subsided, and left an aching void; but dormant vanity awoke, and displayed a rose-colored vision, in whose vista cupids, perfumes, showers of diamonds, and the dark eyes of Blanchard de Volage, floated in bewildering confusion. Lost in contemplation, Cicely sat dreaming until the sound of bells aroused her to reality. Putting on the plumed hat, she tripped lightly down-stairs—one, two, three, four flights—and, opening the front door, stepped out into Christmas, the bells far and near pealing out for—

"Merry, merry Christmas!  
Down through the crowded street,  
While all the city chimes in ringing chorus,  
The Gloria repeat.

"And sounding onward over hill and valley,  
Buried beneath the snow,  
The village spires take up the joyful story.  
Echoing to and fro."

Cicely's feet did not turn toward St.-Bonté's, but, crossing the avenue, they carried her into a car; just standing-room for the two little soles and no more, while the fresh robes were crushed and the plumed hat knocked out of shape by a swaying, struggling crowd. A pull at the bell, the horses stop, and the wedged mass sways wildly from north to south as a female is pushed in from the rear platform. The hangers-on behind climb on again, and the horses struggle forward. Another pull, another stop, and the wedged mass sways from east to west as another female from the extreme forward end is crushed and hauled down the line, and handed out to the pavement in a collapsed condition. Cicely hoped that time would lighten the car, but the hope was vain. On they went, leaving residences behind them, jolting through narrow streets, rumbling along behind huge warehouses, plunging under dark archways, getting off the track at sharp corners; a crushed, cold, and wretched crowd, but still, always a crowd. Cicely had grown up with an implicit belief in the gallantry of the native-American white man, but this ride drove the delusion away forever.

"Oh, if I only had Se—somebody to hold me steady," she thought, as the car gave a sudden lurch.

But no "somebody" was there, and glad was she to escape when the car finally stopped, and let out its victims at Broadway. A hurried walk brought her to the door of old Methuselah. She entered, and beheld—another crowd. Pews, aisles, gallery, chancel-steps, and vestibules, every inch occupied by a densely-packed throng, over whose shoulders she could not hope to look, even if she could have penetrated beyond the entrance. Away in the distance some voices were chanting, overhead sounded the roll of the great organ, but, with the exception of the back seams of two overcoats, Cicely saw nothing of old Methuselah's Christmas service; and after standing half an hour with frozen feet and aching head, she finally went out into the street again, and dreadingly considered the situation.

"Another car up-town, and lunch at the 'Golconda Ladies' Restaurant, as the 'Golden,' of course, is out of the question without Se—somebody as escort," suggested Reason.

Finding a return-car standing at the same corner, Cicely stepped inside, and, glad to obtain a seat after two hours on her feet, she sank thankfully into a corner and closed her eyes. As the car became filled, moisture from many breaths obscured the windows, and gradually a stern wall of overcoats darkened the space between the two sides. After a refreshing rest, Cicely opened her eyes, and, as the names of the streets hoarsely shouted by the conductor sounded strangely unfamiliar, she made an attempt to see through the dripping pane of glass behind her in the hope of recognizing the locality. But she could distinguish nothing, and, after some hesitation, she gently touched the nearest overcoat, murmuring: "If you please, sir, is this the route to Patroon Square?"

No answer, and the overcoat quite unconscious. At this moment "Rip Van Dam Street," was heard from the door, and again Cicely attacked the overcoat. But she made no more impression than before, and presently, "Vander Donck Street" sounded in her ear. Applying both hands to the implacable overcoat, Cicely made another effort. The black wall swayed a little, but, taking firm hold of the strap, relapsed into stolidity again.

"Jan Joris Rapaelje Street!" shouted the hoarse voice, and Cicely

growing desperate as the names grew longer, began beating a tattoo upon the overcoat with such force that it sprang around fiercely with—"What the—creation do you want, ma'am?" The angry tone and scowling brow terrified little Cicely so that she could scarcely gasp out her question, to which when asked the overcoat responded: "Patroon Square? Three miles from here; don't you know where you are going, ma'am?" Then, as Cicely rose and turned toward the door with an anxious look, the overcoat called loudly, "Woman here wants to get out," at the same time settling comfortably down into the vacant seat, and opening a newspaper to prevent further conversation.

When at last Miss Wild succeeded in reaching the door, she ventured to ask how she could reach Patroon Square.

"Take fourth green car to Woutervantwiler Street, and connect with the Pauuw Avenue line," answered the hoarse voice, as a dozen hands lifted her down to the muddy pavement, and the car went on.

Cars were passing in rapid succession, and, selecting the fourth, Cicely stepped inside; as soon as the conductor approached, she asked if this was the route to Patroon Square.

"No!" growled the youth; "second track to the left," and, pulling the bell, he stopped the car and handed her off.

"This must be the right one," thought our bewildered heroine, as a car came in sight on the second track to the left. Again she asked her question, this time not venturing to get on board.

"Red car behind," was the answer, and at last Cicely found herself in the right place, with plenty of time to discover how cold, tired, and hungry, the morning's excursion had left her, not to speak of the condition of her holiday attire. At last Woutervantwiler Street gave place to Pauuw Avenue, and, as a shade of faintness stole over her, the familiar buildings of Patroon Square appeared, and on the right the welcome sign, "Golconda Ladies' Restaurant." With eager step she approached and entered, to find only a sulky boy in possession, and the little tables covered with inhospitable baize.

"Can I have lunch here?" she asked.

"Restaurant ain't open Christmas-day."

"Won't you be able to let me have a few oysters and some coffee?"

"Nothing on hand to-day but candies, mum."

"A singular restaurant!"

"Most ladies lunch at home, or visits out, on Christmas-day; all but country folks, perhaps."

Leaving the "Golconda" with all the dignity she could muster, the forlorn little maiden walked up the street in search of the "Koh-i-noor Dining-rooms for Ladies," whose sign she had often read in happier hours. But the Koh-i-noor's brilliancy was also shrouded in baize, and the countenance of the young woman in charge betokened such lofty scorn that Cicely did not dare to propound her humble question, and, after purchasing a small amount of candy, she retreated in silent humility and resumed the hunt. At length, having walked several miles, she was rendered desperate by the pangs of hunger, and boldly resolved to enter the first restaurant, even although not exclusively for ladies. The "Grand Mogul" received her, as she timidly entered, with a prolonged stare, but made no objection to her seating herself at one of the tables, and after some delay a foreign waiter appeared, and calmly inspected his victim.

"Have you a bill of fare?" asked Cicely. The mogul, however, was too much occupied to reply. He twitched the cloth up, he twitched it down, he patted it on the right, he pulled it on the left, he moved the caster to all four points of the compass, falling back after each change to study the effect, and finally applied all his energy to polishing the mustard spoon, on a much-enduring napkin produced from the recesses of his pocket. "Have you a bill of fare?" ventured Cicely again. The mogul finished the spoon, admired its sheen, replaced it, yawned, and then remarked in a conversational tone:

"Did you speak, Miss?"

"Have you a bill of fare?" repeated the little customer.

"Oh, you mean the *carte*, I presume," in an encouraging tone. "No, miss. On Christmas-day our guests are prepared to expect a certain fixed course suitable to the occasion, a *mélange* of dishes appropriate to the season."

"What are they?" asked Cicely.

"Indeed, miss, it would be difficult to make you understand the names, being French; and, besides, it is one of our rules to surprise our guests on Christmas-day."

"Bring me something, then, as soon as possible," said Cicely, at

last, reduced to abject humility by the dignity of the mogul, and the pangs of hunger; "any thing will do."

"Pardon me, but we never depart from our rules. You shall be served in due time, and with our regular course."

And so it proved. Dish after dish was placed upon the table, each containing unknown compounds of dubious taste and uncertain odor, and, after Cicely had vainly attempted to eat them, the mogul would sweep them away and return with a fresh supply, spreading them out in martial array, and retiring a few steps to watch the effect. Having partially subdued her hunger with bread and potatoes, Cicely ventured to signify her desire for the bill. Mogul departed and came back with a portly document in which the guest was charged for ten courses, price ten dollars, and wished a "merry Christmas" by two corpulent cupids at the top.

"But I have only had five courses," suggested Cicely.

"You are at liberty to have them all, miss—our regular *carte* for Christmas-day, miss; we never depart from our rules."

Out in the street again with lightened purse, Cicely hesitated. Should she give it up and ignominiously beat a retreat? Never! There was the pantomime at Mallot's, designated in the original Christmas programme, and, signalling an omnibus, she journeyed down toward the enchanted realms where dwelt wonderful clowns, fairy columbines, and mysterious harlequins. As the performance had commenced, the vestibule was comparatively empty, and Cicely went up to the dungeon to buy her ticket.

"Reserved seat forward, three dollars," said a voice within.

"I thought the price was a dollar and a half," answered Cicely, standing on tiptoe to see the owner of the voice.

"Christmas-day, prices raised," growled the man, and, giving the money in haste, Cicely shrank away, and opened the inner door. Here was a crowd beyond anything she had yet seen, a dense mass of human beings of all ages. A band was playing, and shouts of laughter greeted the actors, who were entirely invisible to little Cicely, with a wall of overcoats towering above her head on all sides. Even a worm will turn when trampled upon, and as Cicely recovered her breath, after a hard push from a particularly disagreeable man who passed her rudely at the door, she caught the usher by the arm, and demanded her reserved seat with some asperity.

"Very sorry, miss; great crowd; Christmas-day, miss. Only three vacant seats left in front, obliged to charge a dollar extra for them."

"But I have already paid an extra price for this ticket."

"Very sorry, miss. Christmas-day. A dollar extra. Those are my orders."

Determined, after so many disappointments, to enjoy at least a taste of holiday festivity, Cicely paid the required sum, and then began a series of hand-to-hand encounters with overcoats, as, following the usher, she wrestled her way through the throng. One very young gentleman of Hebrew descent accompanied her a portion of the way, and truly grateful was Miss Wild for his assistance; turning to thank him when she discovered the vacant seat near by, behold he was gone, but she had no time to regret his departure, as the glories of the stage met her eye, and soon forgot every thing but the fairy scene before her. In a few minutes a voice on the left murmured:

"Pretty, isn't it?"

"Beautiful," answered Cicely, warmly, without removing her eyes from the stage.

"You don't hail from the city, I'll bet," resumed the voice; "I know that by your fresh color."

Startled by this remark, Miss Wild turned her head, and encountered the admiring gaze of a precocious youth of perhaps fifteen summers. Turning her back upon this aspiring Lothario, Cicely's attention was again fixed upon the stage, when a voice on the left began:

"Fair unknown, why so pensive?"

This time the offender was a rotund gentleman of mature age, and Cicely, somewhat alarmed, returned no answer, but looked steadily toward the stage. "Offended?" resumed the voice; "charming unknown, deign to glance with pity upon an humble admirer." At this petition, Cicely rose from her seat and looked back over the sea of faces; no usher was in sight, but, preferring a stormy passage to the presence of the humble admirer, she boldly made her way into the aisle, and after many perils arrived at the vestibule, where, encountering the usher, she made a formal complaint. "Very sorry, miss; Christmas-day; impossible to keep order; great crowd,"

responded the usher, in polite jerks. But Cicely was not appeased. "It is disgraceful!" she exclaimed with withering emphasis. "Very sorry, miss; Christmas-day; most ladies has gentlemen with them in such a crowd," retorted the usher.

Out in the street again, Miss Wild walking rapidly up-town; the sky had grown dark, and a raw east wind swept through the city. What next? A firm resolve to go somewhere and do something filled her mind, and, remembering the painted notice "Open Daily" over the Mottled Alhambra, she turned her steps toward its classic walls, only to find on the pre-Raphaelite doors the following inscription: "Closed on Christmas-day." Crossing the city to another abode of art, she encountered on the threshold the pleasant welcome, "Gallery closed; Christmas-day." Standing at the inhospitable door, Cicely glanced up and down the broad street; already the shadows of twilight darkened the sidewalks, and the east wind swept all before him. With dreary resignation she signalled an omnibus, and, slipping into the only vacant seat, felt in her pocket for her purse. Alas, it was gone! Like a vision of the night, the face of the gallant young Hebrew rose in Cicely's mind. What should she do? Better get out as quick as possible before called upon for fare. Left again in the darkening street, Cicely hurried homeward, chilled and hungry, starting at every shadow, dreading every step coming up behind, and grieving over her lost money. At length the narrow lofty front, under whose roof-tree our weary bird had her perch, came into view, and, in response to Cicely's ring, the severely proper Priscilla Ann opened the door.

"Oh, it's you, Miss Wild, is it? I thought you intended to dine out to-day. I know Miss Rogers thought so, for she said all the boarders was out, and there'd be no dinner to get. So there's nobody at home but me, and I've got company in the kitchen."

"It's of no consequence, Priscilla Ann," said Cicely; "I shall do very well; I lunched heartily—my plans were unexpectedly altered. I—"

But Priscilla was gone, and Cicely commenced the long ascent to her perch, wishing she was in reality a bird, that wings might save her weary feet. Arrived at last, she found the fire out; the heartless little stove was cold as a stone. Divesting herself of her holiday attire, she plunged into its black depths, and, with soot on her nose and grimy hands, began laying the foundations anew with the utmost care, for well she knew the perfidiousness of the little imp, kindling with brilliant haste, and then going out without the slightest provocation. Needing more coal, Cicely stepped into the hall, when, as she reached the coal-box, the sound of the opposite door sent her flying into a closet, from whose dark depths she had the pleasure of beholding Mr. Blanchard de Volage, exquisitely dressed, coming out of his room and descending the stairs, humming an opera air as he went. The closing door, four flights below, told of his departure. "I wonder where he has gone?" thought Cicely, as she went back with her coal; "to-morrow morning I shall certainly begin to encourage him. Heretofore I have parried his advances, but now I am free, and can do as I please."

The fire well started, the next thought was dinner. The early breakfast, and the intangible lunch of the Great Mogul, had left an aching void behind. Priscilla Ann must on no account be disturbed, and the approaching darkness forbade any extended foraging expedition; but, remembering a little family supply-store around the corner, Cicely donned her old cloak and hat, and, stealing down the stairs, sallied forth for her small supplies. But the supply-store was closed, no doubt on account of "Christmas-day," and wandering on, block after block, she at length found a brilliantly-lighted shop, where she made her little purchases, with a crushing sense of their insignificance as compared with the grandeur of the magnate who measured them out. Having obtained from this dignitary a quarter-pound of coffee, the same of sugar, a loaf of bread, a can of oysters, and a small tin pail, to serve as coffee-pot, Cicely got into a car, and seated herself with her arms encumbered with brown-paper parcels. By this time it was quite dark, and she was anxiously waiting for the familiar corner of X—Street, when the car stopped; there was a block in front, two cars off the track, and a carriage overturned at the cross-street. Sitting there patiently holding her bundles, Cicely looked out through the glass at the line of stationary vehicles alongside. Presently there was a movement, then another stop, and this time an elegant carriage met her gaze, so close that the faces of the occupants were distinctly

visible in the glare of the adjoining street-lamp. The tin pail dropped at her feet, and the oysters followed, as she recognized Blanchard de Volage and Miss Van Airytop, the very Wilhemina whose aquiline nose and pale-blue eyes were her especial aversion. With a fixed gaze, Cicely watched the smiles, glances, and gay conversation, within the carriage, a Christmas pantomime, indeed, although not the one she had planned. Evidently an intimate relation existed between the two; and Blanchard's eyes, oh, perfidy! rested upon his companion with the same expression, the very identical devotion, which Cicely had so often seen beaming upon herself. At this point, Miss Van Airytop archly shook her blond ringlets, and something flashed. What was it? Could it be? It was! The very pair of fringed diamond car-rings she had seen at Aladdin's Palace, in Blanchard's hand. The carriage moved on, and all the bundles fell to the floor, as Miss Wild sought for her handkerchief and furtively wiped her eyes.

Wearily ringing the bell, Cicely endured, as well as she could, the impatient glance of Priscilla Ann and her inquisitive comment. "Well, now, Miss Wild, if it ain't you again! And with all them bundles, too!" Climbing the stairs, she unlocked her cell-door and entered; the fire was out, of course, and no more kindling left in the box. Another encounter with Priscilla Ann was clearly impossible, and, after a reckless sacrifice of all her letter-paper and a pamphlet novel, the sullen little stove consented to blaze, and hope revived. Filling the tin pail with water from the pitcher, Cicely removed the cover and endeavored to insert the *impromptu* coffee-pot into the top of the stove; but a puff of smoke repelled her, and the pail was left to thaw on the outside, while the oyster-can was attacked with a pocket-knife. Two jerks and a wrench, one blade broken; two more jerks, another gone. A fruit-knife next fell a sacrifice, and two pairs of scissors were lamed for life, but the oyster-can remained unharmed. Some book recommended a red-hot poker, but when, after much labor, the poker was heated, it refused to burn any thing but Cicely's arm, where a fragment of merino and a portion of skin responded gayly to the melting touch.

Binding up the smarting wrist as well as she could, Cicely gave up the oysters, and sat down to wait for the water to boil. Six, half-past, and seven, sounded from St.-Bonté's slender spire, and still that water continued mildly tepid; at last the famished little school-mistress poured in the coffee, and, after a gentle simmer, drank the mixture, with the accompanying delicacy of dry bread. It was not good. Even the Marchioness, with her "make believe very much," could not have relished it. Sitting on the floor, with begrimed face and smarting wrist, Cicely caught sight of her rival, the sketch of the morning. Snatching it from the table, she flung it into the fire and watched it burn with gloomy satisfaction; then, as the remembrance of the angry words she had written to Seth came over her, she laid her tired head on a chair and burst into tears.

A knock at the door aroused her, and, unlocking it, Priscilla's voice was heard.

"A young man to see you, Miss Wild; Mr. Austin, I believe."

Down-stairs flew Cicely, just as she was, nor paused until a pair of strong arms received her in the deserted drawing-room.

Seth seemed much excited, for, without noticing her appearance, or commenting upon her angry note, he exclaimed: "I have perfected my invention, Cicely, the firm have examined it, it is to be patented, and I am a partner from this date! What do you say to that for a Christmas present, darling?"

The great tidings proved only sober truth; the absent-minded, engrossed inventor had reaped the fruits of his hard brain-work, and a bright future opened before him.

"I kept it all a secret, for I wanted to surprise you, and spare you the anxiety of suspense," he said, after the first eager questions and answers. "I spoiled your Christmas, dear, but here is a trifle to make you forget all about it."

The trifle was a box containing a pair of fringed diamond earrings, more superb than any Cicely had seen.

"O Seth! And I have nothing to give you," said the "nut-brown mayde," with tearful eyes, and a heart full of repentance.

"You *have* something to give me, Cicely, and I am come to beg for it. You can give me a dear little wife. See! I take her, in spite of herself; and who shall say this is not, after all, a merry Christmas?"

CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON