

gant dreams of Cummingsville. Much against her own will, she had left home with what, to the Cummingsville mind, habituated to economy, was sufficient for a year's expenses.

"Now it won't do harm, Rosalie," Aunt Rebecca had said when she added twenty-five dollars to the fund, "for you to start out with a big capital, even if you never touch a cent of it."

"Never touch a cent!" She had barely enough to last until the thousand-dollar prize was awarded to "The Broken Heart." Not that this shortage alarmed her. It was merely annoying, since she was so eager to carry back to Cummingsville a magnificent display of Christmas presents. For the awards were not to be made until the morning of the twenty-fourth, and she left early in the afternoon.

As it was, Rosalie roamed through the streets, spellbound by the sumptuous preparations for the coming festival, enthralled by the exultation of the Christmas-making crowds. These days every window was a bower of greens and holly, every passer-by was loaded down with gifts, the streets were lined with booths, where strident hucksters cried their Christmas wares and forced the busy shopper into buying toys. Forests of Christmas-trees, which had come to the city in great train-loads, sprouted from the dingy gutters. Santa Claus rode, revealed, through the streets, followed by crowds of delirious children. The shop windows held glimpses of a fairyland where Kris Kringle ruled supreme. Nor were the poor forgotten. Dinners and presents without number were in wait for them. The city was thronged with holiday guests. Amusements blossomed on every hand, and the air was charged with a Christmas cheer such as Rosalie had never known. For at Cummingsville this season held no such royal pageant. It was, instead, a solemn occasion. The joviality of its tree and presents was discounted by the presence of sober-faced relatives, while the Christmas service gave it the aspect of Sunday. Indeed, but for the celebration awaiting her home-coming, Rosalie would have regretted missing Christmas Day in New York. As it was, the village was waiting to do her honor, and guests from all the surrounding country were bidden to the Christmas-eve reception. Her alma mater, the Worcester Female Seminary, was tendering her a banquet. The general opinion was that it had been a good thing for New York to be waked up by a girl of Rosalie's talent. The elite of Cummingsville were even planning trips to the metropolis for the sake of seeing the much-talked of "Broken Heart" at the "student's exhibition."

When Rosalie arose the morning before Christmas it was to find a heavy snow covering the ground. Washington Square was a frozen forest beneath her window. Her big valise, stocked with Christmas presents, stood packed and ready for the afternoon train. Miss Hancock, the next-door model, had gone out in pursuit of an engagement, so Rosalie set out alone to her coronation. The sharp air nipped her cheeks and set her blood to tingling.

Once the masterpiece was completed, whatever qualms she had suffered during its creation had vanished, and for days she had been waiting her laurel wreath with the calm assurance of the victor. Night after night the vision of her ovation had come to her in dreams. She strode up Fifth Avenue, unmindful for once of the gay scene about her, beholding only her coming triumph. The admiration of her fellow-students was a luscious morsel, the surprise of her unseeing teachers sweet to contemplate, and the eager recognition from the great among artists rang in her ears like a psalm. So absorbed was she in her coming victory that she cast no glance at the excited knots gathered at the entrance of the gallery. Straight to the office she marched.

"I am Miss Cummings," she smiled at the distracted man behind the desk.

"Miss Cummings?"

"Miss Rosalie Cummings, the artist who painted 'The Broken Heart.'"

"Oh, yes," he glanced over the list before him. "Your picture is ready to send back. As a competitor you are entitled to a ticket to the exhibition, and here is a list of the pictures." He shoved some papers toward her.

That was all! No, not quite; for the

SOME ATTRACTIVE CHRISTMAS GIFTS

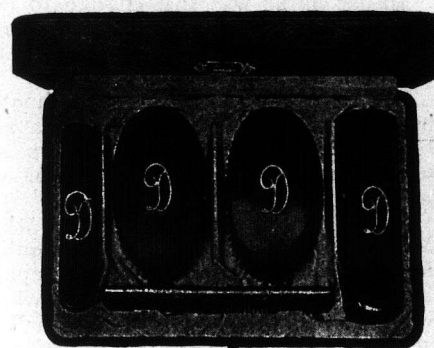
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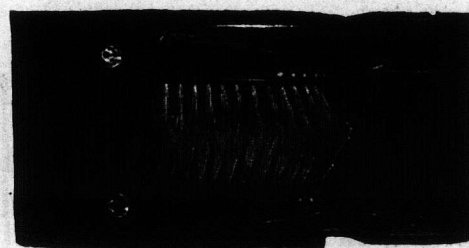
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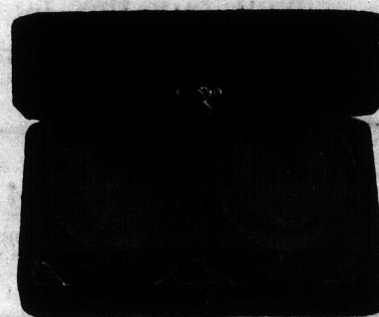
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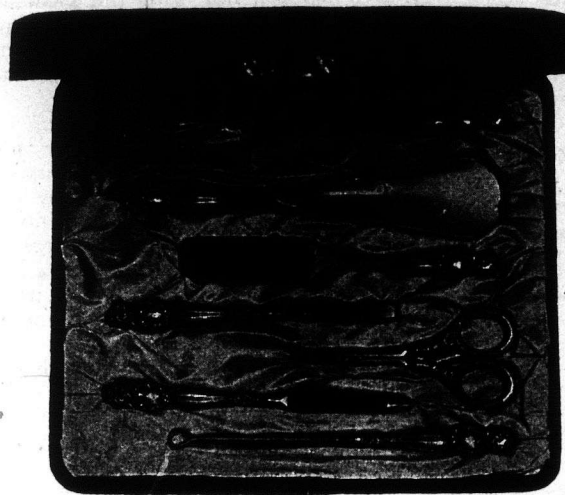
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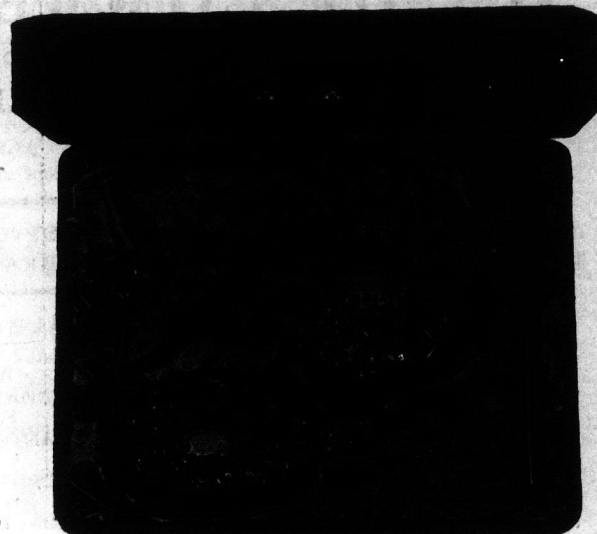
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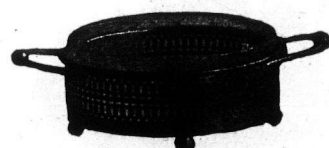
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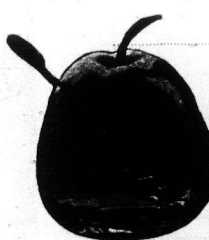
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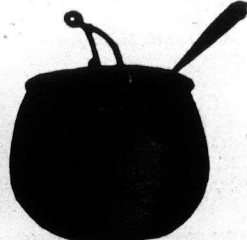
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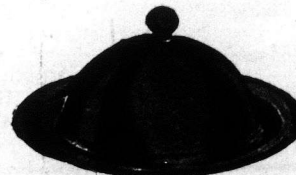
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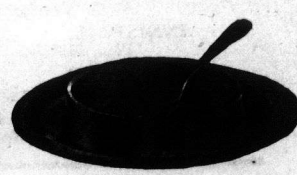
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