



His First Holiday

The chatty Tobias, reminiscent and more or less paternal, swung into an alley entrance in course of time, — not without a smug uplifting of his left eyebrow, — and trotted his venerable nag onward until a sharp rapping on the window-glass from within brought him to a rather heroic stop between two widely separated back gates.

"Drive on to the next gate," called out the young lady, partly opening the door. Bosworth almost fell off in his valiant attempt to catch a glimpse of her face.

With a great deal of stealth and no small amount of suppressed, eager laughter, they made their way into the kitchen of the quaint old house.

Half an hour later Mr. Bosworth Van Pycke, suffering somewhat from stage fright but buoyed by the promise of unequivocal success in his new rôle, bounded from the pantry into the dining-room, befurred and bewhiskered, with nothing showing but his nose, greatly to the delight and consternation of a dozen small children who shrieked with excitement.

He had appeared with some success in amateur theatricals and had led cotillons under the most nerve-racking conditions, but never before had he come plump against an audience of children. It was rather terrifying. He halted in the middle of the room, to the left of the brilliantly lighted, tinselled tree with its load of presents, and there he stuck, spellbound, until the shrill voice of one less awed than the rest broke the hush that had fallen upon the expectant group in the row of chairs beyond.

"Hello, Santy!" piped up this small, confident voice.