

tion and very much puzzled over it. What a time they had. Such explanations and apologies. Mr. Gripps blaming himself and saying he had only just discovered what a hard hearted old fellow he was, and Mrs. Stephen Gripps quite deprecating the idea and begging him not to mention it, and Mr. Gripps telling them about the kettle and what he had seen in it, and how the wind had spoken to him and what it had said, and Fred horrifying them all by laughing aloud in the midst of it; and Rosa sitting up in her bed and saying she felt so much better, and her mother and Mr. Gripps and all of them being afraid lest the excitement should be bad for her as she had been very ill and was only just recovering; and then Mr. Gripps calling up the cabman, and he and Charlie and Fred assisting in bringing the hampers and parcels up stairs and into the kitchen, and Mr. Gripps regretting that it was growing so late that he must go, but saying that he was coming to see them to-morrow after church to inquire how Rosa was. After all the fuss, and Rosa drawing her mother's face down to her's and whispering something in her ear, and Mrs. Stephen Gripps after a little hesitation telling Mr. Gripps in a very timid way that Rosa wanted to know if he would not come to dinner and make them all so happy, and Mr. Gripps promising and saying they must not change their hour for him, if they dined early, as he always dined early himself on Christmas. There never surely was a happier party on the whole, and never a more delightful, conciliatory old gentleman than Mr. Gripps. In fact he hardly knew himself, and after he had said good night and was once more in the cab and driving through the snow-paved streets, he felt very much like asking himself the question of the old woman in the story, "Can this be I?"

All sorts of new and delightful emotions were struggling in his breast and careering through his mind. There was not a more hilarious old gentleman in all the city this Christmas Eve, and yet there was, even with the mirth and the new strange sense of rejoicing, a chastened, solemn feeling. We know it well, each one of us. It is the deep feeling of Christmas. The plaintive minor in the jubilant Gloria in Excelsis.

The wind had fallen and the storm gave promise of a calm; and what wind there was had a strangely different sound now to Mr. Gripps. He seemed to hear it faintly but triumphantly in the far distance beginning the prelude to an old-time strain—a strain that since when first it echoed over the hills of Bethlehem has brought "Tidings of great joy" to a sorrowful world: "Glory to God in the Highest: on earth peace, good will towards men."

If Mr. Gripps could have looked at his kettle now I am sure he would have seen only crowds and crowds of cherubim and seraphim and white winged tiny angels.

The imps and hobgoblins and that dreadful nameless creature most certainly would not have been there. They were exorcised; for the power of the Nativity was shed abroad in one more heart. And finding that the shops were still open this ridiculous old gentleman, who really did not seem to know what to do with his money now, got out again at one and another and made ever so many more purchases.

A fur-lined circular for Mrs. Stephen, fur capes and muffs for the three girls, overcoats and caps for the two boys, a great roll of flannel, which as he told himself would be sure

to come in useful; and, just fancy,—what good genius could have put it into his dear old head? a set of splendid dinner knives with steel and carvers all complete, the very thing, the want of which had been troubling Mrs. Stephen Gripps when she had given him Rosa's invitation.

It was Christmas morning and the bells of Christ Church and Notre Dame and a host of churches, English and French, were ringing out their glad, glad, peals over the beautiful mountain city, calling men everywhere to rejoice that Christ was born. Oh how glorious looked the temples of God, how goodly was their fragrance with the fir tree and the balsam and the cedar.

Christmas in the Forest country,
Holy Christmas in the West;
In their snowy robes of beauty
All the cedar trees are drest,
All the cedars and the maples,
All the balsams and the pines,
And their snow wreaths turn to jewels
Where the sunlight on them shines.

The trees on the mountain slopes, in the parks and squares, along the streets and everywhere, were jewel-clad; and at church Mr. Gripps in his pew near the chancel had a real halo round his heart. Was it not wonderful? But I suppose it was the light shining through the stained glass window, for of course it was nothing supernatural.

I do not suppose there were many such dinners in St. Dominique Street as Mrs. Stephen Gripps'. The turkey, stuffed with the oysters, was pronounced by Mr. Gripps who carved it with the new carving knife, to be done to a turn, though Mrs. Stephen Gripps was afraid it had had just five minutes too much. The beef and the ham and the vegetables were simply perfection, and the plum pudding and the celery, which I had forgotten to mention, were faultless. And such raisins and such almonds and oranges and apples and figs!

I must not forget to tell you that there was an addition to the party, a young Mr. Capers, with very red cheeks and very black eyes and very white teeth, who sat beside Rosa at the dinner table, for Rosa was at dinner with them all to-day for the first time in many days, and who blushed almost as vividly as Rosa herself when Mrs. Stephen Gripps introduced him with a meaning look as "A friend of ours."

Mrs. Stephen took occasion privately to inform Mr. Gripps that he was a very particular friend of Rosa's. And Mr. Gripps wanted to know if he was any relation of Capers of the Stock Exchange, and was told that he was a cousin, and that Mr. Capers, of the Exchange, though at first a little shocked when informed of the attachment, had said afterwards that for the matter of that he had known Stephen Gripps in his life time, and the Gripps' were a very good family, though they had gone down in the world after Stephen's failure and death, and that if Rosa was as good as she was pretty they need not be ashamed of the connection. Whereat Mr. Gripps, quite oblivious of his own conduct in circumstances somewhat analogous, drew himself up and said, "I should think not."

There was a great deal more said on this and on other subjects before Mr. Gripps left, and at New Year there was a new clerk in Mr. Gripps' office, "My Nephew Charles," and a new pupil at Mr. Totup's Commercial Academy, and two additional young lady pupils at Miss Seedling's select seminary; and young Mr. Capers by some mysterious invisible agency had been promoted to quite a good post by his employers, and Rosa who had grown well and strong again, was spending a great deal of time at her sewing machine and turning out a great many articles of feminine apparel of such elaborate design and with such an amount of tucking and shirring and other ornamentation that it was only reasonable to conclude they must be intended for something more than ordinary wear. Oh, the blessed influence of Christmas on the hearts and lives of men! How benignant, how far-reaching.

"Wake thy ten thousand voices earth,
Outpour thy floods of praise.
Up to the crystal gates of morn
The deep Hosannas raise,
Till heavenward wafted, seraph-winged
They pierce the illumined zone
Where the Church triumphant's chorus swells
Round the everlasting throne."