

# A Storm-Bound Christmas

By Dorothy Douglas

He had been on his way to San Francisco to spend Christmas with his favorite married sister; and midway, in the most barren desert of the country, a bridge had been swept away by winter gales. His destination could not possibly be reached until Christmas was well over.

Wallingford cast a glance over the wide stretch of rolling plains with only a few scattered shacks to break their endless waste; and then he looked back to his bulging suit case. The latest and most wonderful toys he could find in the city shops were crowded into that bag for his sister's only boy. Then, not caring whether or not a highwayman might be looking in at the window of the parlor car, he took a small box from his waistcoat pocket and looked scornfully at a ring from which three exquisite diamonds flashed back at him.

Wallingford leaned back in his chair and in imagination pictured his sister's joy when slipping that ring on her finger. He could hear her shout him for having no one else for whom to buy such baubles. He sighed and returned it to his pocket much as he might have cast it to the depths of the sea; it would do him as much good there as it would in his pocket under the present circumstances.

As events tumbled themselves about in his brain, Wallingford pictured himself sitting alone and friendless eating his Christmas dinner in some filthy hotel of the prairie. There would be innumerable little boat-shaped side dishes circling his plate and in each there would be a scant portion of a watery vegetable. Perhaps on the outside of this array—if he was lucky—there would be an extra saucer graced by a piece of canned plum pudding.

Wallingford again—canned plum pudding to take the place of the old-fashioned one he dreamed of from year to year, and which his sister never failed to make for him. He shuddered in contemplation and determined that such would not be his lot even if he had to go from door to door and beg to be taken in for dinner.

The shack of a station at which their train had stopped held not the slightest possibility. Wallingford had sent a telegram to his sister informing her of the delay and regretting that he must turn and go back east without seeing her. Business had given him a short leisure.

old Santy this time, didn't you? And he came especially to find out what you wanted him to bring down the chimney—  
"Wallingford! How in the name of all that's possible did you get here?" Dick Elkins, an old chum of New York days, stood in the doorway and held out a glad hand of welcome.

A weight of relief fell from Wallingford's shoulders. He was no longer a stranger in a strange house. And did he imagine it, or did a glad light come also into the eyes of the woman?  
"How about yourself?" he asked when they had shaken hands.  
"This is my own house and my own sister," laughed Elkins. "But where in the world did you and Mrs. Vale strike up an acquaintance?" He cast an interrogative glance at his sister.

"Sis, you never told me—"  
Sylvia glanced quickly at Wallingford and a deep blush mingled with the glow from the fire in her cheeks. She explained the circumstances and Wallingford was quickly made to feel that he had come to the right house.  
"I will stay under one condition only," he said finally, "and that is that you all will accept, without protest, the Christmas gifts which I brought for my sister and her family—without question."  
There was a moment's silence and the promise was made, laughingly.  
"But we will have to return the favor," brother and sister spoke as one voice.

So it was decided.  
"Too bad Vale couldn't get here," remarked Elkins, later in the evening when the small boy having been tucked into bed, the three sat about the blazing fire.  
"Yes—we would have made a jolly quartet," said Sylvia.  
Wallingford was almost guilty of a gasp. The calm, unconcerned way in which she remarked that her husband would have completed a quartet on Christmas eve had been able to get there, was rather disconcerting.  
Dick Elkins arose and left the room to get the boy's toys.  
"Bring down the suitcase in my room," cried Wallingford. He was as excited as a boy.  
"You will not regret having promised to accept what had brought for my sister?" Wallingford leaned slightly toward Sylvia's gray dress and through the strands of her golden hair, and the man in him had a struggle before quenching the light in his own eyes. It was the girl herself who was unable to hide a tremor.  
"I promise," she said unsteadily.  
"But it seems—odd."  
Wallingford tried to say that he felt her husband would not raise any objection under the circumstances, but somehow mention of her husband was impossible.

Dick returned, staggering under a load of toys. Then they all jumped gladly into the spirit of Christmas.  
"When my husband was living," said Sylvia as she pinned up a tiny crumpled plum pudding.

Wallingford was reconciled to a Christmas dinner over a lunch counter when his eye caught the name of Yankeeville. Yankeeville probably boasted a near-wealthy inhabitant, yet Yankeeville also suggested the name of Every-Jack Everly. When Wallingford had last heard of Jack Everly the latter was located in Yankeeville. That was some eighteen months before, but there was no reason why he should not be there still.

It seemed that everyone in Yankeeville knew the Everly homestead. It was the only one of any proportions in the village.  
The red glow from an open fire within cheered Wallingford's numbed faculties as he rang the bell at the Everly door.  
On the face of her who opened the door, surprise was the principal expression. For Wallingford, his six-foot-two encased in a great fur coat all dangled with glistening snow beads and his handsome glowing face looking frankly into her own, was a surprise for any eyes.

"She did not wait for him to explain his errand but with the matron's privilege of hospitality invited him into the warmth of the house."  
"It was too cold to stand outside," she explained and waited for his question.  
"I am Bob Wallingford," he began meeting the easy cordial expression of her blue eyes. "I am one of the belated passengers of the bridge tie and decided to run over and see if Jack Everly would take pity on an old friend and—"  
"Jack Everly left Yankeeville," a smile played about her lips as mention of the illustrious village, "some six or seven months ago—"  
Embarrassment, disappointment and surprise mingled equally in Wallingford's face and did not escape the eyes of Sylvia Vale. She spoke with ready tact.  
"Take off that great coat, anyway, and come into the fireside. It's no night to be out."  
Wallingford followed the slim gray-clad figure in a decidedly chaotic state of mind. Mingled with his embarrassment at having walked into an absolute stranger's house, was the sudden attraction he felt for this girl with the sunlit hair. Something—the combination perhaps—was making him feel like a tongue-tied schoolboy. It was a most unusual state of mind for Bob Wallingford.

There was a patter of little feet and a tiny boy of three years threw himself into Wallingford's arms.  
"Oh! Are you Santa Claus?" he cried gleefully. "I heard your sleigh bells and saw your big fuzzy coat! Mamma, isn't he Santa Claus?"  
The child's mother would have spoken but Wallingford's eyes pleaded for silence.  
"You young rascal! You caught

# A CHRISTMAS ALLAS

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C.N. AND A.M. WILLIAMSON



ward to our one country-house visit in England; and, of course, it was very nice, but it did seem an anti-climax when the very man I'd been invited to flirt with never turned up at all. Oh, what he missed!" and she laughed.  
Belever could cheerfully have kicked himself. To think that he might have met this divine creature in a decent, self-respecting manner, if only he hadn't sent an unworthy excuse to those good but dull people, the Dering-Lacys.

Through inquiries he had learned at the Bristol that the ladies were Mrs. and Miss Fleetwood, but somehow he had failed to associate the name with that of the American heiress with whom the Dering-Lacys had tried to tempt him a few weeks ago. And in his blindness he had rejoiced in the thought of meeting the girl at Amalfi, whither he had ascertained

a handsome, aquiline-faced young man, so dark of skin that he might well have passed for an Italian. At the heads of the impatient horses stood an impassive English groom.  
Young Lord Belever, who was driving his own coach, scanned eagerly, from under the brim of his smart bowler, the persons who came crowding out of the station. His eyes lighted with pleasure as a girl appeared in the doorway, followed by an older lady, and two porters, carrying luggage and wraps. A dash of Parisian smartness in the lines of the well-cut traveling dress and the perfectly fitting boots, a more than Anglo-Saxon frankness and independence of carriage, announced the girl as an American.

A driver bent down from the box of his carriage, and in answer to a question from the young lady, in elementary Italian, demanded 14 francs for the driver.  
"But 'Beadeker' says the tariff is five or six," expostulated the girl. Her Italian was fluent, if the grammar was a little shaky. Lord Belever, from his high box-seat, heard every word.  
"Beadeker!" The Italian driver snapped his fingers with a gesture of contempt. "Fourteen francs is the fare."  
The girl bit her lip. She thought she was being cheated and that made her angry.  
"Perhaps we had better take him and have done with it, dear," suggested the older lady. "It doesn't matter much, you know. There are not many carriages left. If we bargain too long we may get none."  
"Mamma," exclaimed the beauty, "I hate to be cheated!"  
She looked around, and catching sight of Belever's pawing, glossy bays, her pleased eyes traveled in one glance up to the box-seat, where the young man sat looking eagerly down on her.

"Why, mamma," exclaimed the girl, "if there isn't a perfectly lovely coach, and I believe the man wants to drive us!"  
"It's sure to be more than the cab, dear."  
"How much to drive us to Amalfi?" cried the girl.  
"Five francs each, ladies," was the prompt answer in good Italian, the language in which the coachman had been addressed.  
"Bene," came the quick reply, and the girl signed to the porters to put the bags and wraps inside the coach. The groom, hiding a grin, ran with a ladder; the elder lady mounted to a place behind the driver, the beauty climbing to the box-seat. With a flick of the long whip the bays dashed forward.

"I call this too glorious for words!" The beauty's cheeks were tinged with carmine, brought there by the tingling sea air that blew up the ravine; her eyes sparkled. "Aren't we in luck, mamma, to have got seats in this splendid coach, and with such a driver, too? See how well he handles the reins! And his profile looks as if he were cast in bronze."  
"Take care, Lesley! Are you sure he doesn't understand you, dear?"  
"Oh, that's all right! Very few of these Italian drivers know more than two or three words of English."

Then the girl began to talk Italian to the coachman and he answered her in the same tongue, fluently and courteously. Belever could speak Italian nearly as well as his own language and Lesley's knowledge was not deep enough to detect his few slips. He felt guilty, but dared not betray his nationality, lest the ladies should insist on being put down at the next village.  
"Well, mamma," cried Lesley, turning in her place, "we've had a splendid time in Europe, haven't we? We've seen and done such a lot of things. But I believe I like Italy best of all. Of course, Egypt was gorgeous and Greece was lovely—"  
"And England—" prompted the mother.

"England was sweet. But it was disappointing in one way. Only fancy our not meeting one single, solitary, real, live, lord. I shall be ashamed to go home. My country expected it of me. And—I failed. Such a shame we should have missed Lord Belever! When I brought three new dresses on purpose, too!"  
Belever started. This was a nice scrape he had got himself into. But he didn't see any way out of it now. He could not suddenly exclaim, "Behold, I am Lord Belever!" He had seldom been more uncomfortable; but the worst of it was that he found himself base enough to snatch a fearful joy from the situation.  
"I dare say he would have been most uninteresting when you came to know him," the girl's mother proceeded to console her.  
"But the Dering-Lacys said he was awfully clever and good-looking, don't you remember? I was so looking for-

ward to our one country-house visit in England; and, of course, it was very nice, but it did seem an anti-climax when the very man I'd been invited to flirt with never turned up at all. Oh, what he missed!" and she laughed.  
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from the hotel porter that they were going, and whether he had already purposed driving in his coach, which had lately won honors in the coaching meet at Naples.  
These desperate reflections drove the hitherto loquacious coachman into an obstinate silence. He answered vaguely the questions with which Lesley did not cease to ply the "perfectly lovely coachman with the coach profile." He was actually relieved when he stopped his horses at the foot of the long flight of steps that wound up the cliff to the Hotel Cappuccini.  
His mind was in a tumult. He, too, was due at the Cappuccini, where his room was engaged; but now he hesitated to go and claim it and to appear in his own person before the American ladies. The craven thought came into his mind that he should run away; then he half resolved to declare himself at once. He had been unable to decide upon a course of action when the ladies prepared to descend from the coach. Then he overheard Lesley whisper to her mother: "He's been so nice and intelligent, don't you think we might give him a couple of francs for himself?" Before he could speak, the girl had placed 12 francs in his hand, wishing him a smiling goodby.

Belever hesitated. To speak, or not to speak—which was wiser in the mind of man? But he found himself maintaining his part by uttering a deferential "Molto grazie, signorina." Belever turned his smoking team, and walked them back to their stable in the town, where he left coach and horses in the hands of his groom. Stroiling slowly back to the Cappuccini steps, his courage suddenly returned to him. He would face the music, brave out the situation and trust to his own tact and the ladies' sense of humor to save the position. One thing only was impossible—to give up the adventure and see the girl no more. He mounted the many steps, received a warm welcome from the handsome and effusive Italian landlord, and in the visitors' book set a firm, clear "Belever, England." Immediately under the clever, characteristic writing in which Lesley had inscribed the names of "Mrs. and Miss Fleetwood, New York, U. S. A."

Until the gong clashed out the hour of dinner Belever kept his room, writing letters, slowly changing into his evening clothes, stopping every now and then to lean upon his window-ledge and gaze out upon the incomparable beauty of Amalfi. He was among the earliest persons in the room, vaulted dining-room, once the refectory of the Capuchins, and a word in the ear, and a coin in the hand of the head-waiter, procured him a place next to Miss Fleetwood. This arranged, he retired a little and mingled with the throng of Germans, English, French, and Americans who were trooping in to dinner. In a moment or two he saw Mrs. Fleetwood and her daughter coming in from the reading-room, Lesley in a simple but charming white evening dress, shining in his eyes, among the other women, like a flower among weeds.

When the two ladies were seated Belever grasped his courage in both hands and, with a thumping heart, took the vacant place by Lesley's side. The girl looked up. Her eyes widened with wonder as she gave him

a quick, surprised glance; then a gleam of merriment flashed into her face, and a rich, warm blush reddened her cheeks, tinged even the shell-like ear. Belever saw, with infinite relief, that the first encounter was to be decided in his favor. He smiled and bowed, looking very handsome in his evening dress.  
"I hope," he ventured, "that you are not tired after your drive."  
Mrs. Fleetwood was looking at him across her daughter.  
"Is it possible—?" she had begun. "I'm afraid it is, mamma," Lesley cut in mischievously. "Somewhere there's been a very big mistake. Whether it's our fault or this gentleman's, I don't know."  
"Let me take all the blame," said Belever, hastily, "if blame there be, for letting myself appear to be what I am not. It was hard to withstand the temptation of having two ladies as companions on the drive."  
"And I—made personal remarks, and gave you two francs for yourself!" Lesley threw up her two little hands in horror.  
"It was the sincerest compliment I ever received," said Belever. "I shall always keep the coin in recollection of the pleasantest drive of my life." It was wonderfully happy again by this time.

"And that was really your own coach and you are not an Italian?"  
"I am as little Italian as you are. I drive my coach for my own pleasure about this coast. I have rented one of those old watch towers which we passed on the way and am having it furnished and fitted up for me now. It would give me great pleasure if you and your mother will take tea with me there one afternoon."  
"That would be delightful," Lesley exclaimed, but her forehead had a little, thoughtful pucker and she spoke abstractedly. Belever feared that she was trying to recall the things she had said in English to her mother in the course of the drive, and to keep her from a reflection that might be dangerous to himself, he dashed into conversation.  
"By the way," Lesley was saying, "we saw in the visitors' book that Lord Belever is in the hotel. He seems to have arrived to-day, for his name is just under ours. Do you happen to know him?"  
Lesley had glanced curiously as she spoke along the row of diners lingering over their nuts, and now she turned full to her companion. In spite of himself he flushed scarlet. He was beginning a stammering reply, when the look on the girl's face checked his words. The truth had flashed into her understanding like a lightning stroke and she was enduring bitter mortification when she remembered how freely she had spoken of him in his own hearing. Her face first crimsoned, then froze into icy brightness. Belever looked at her beseechingly and would have spoken had she not stopped him with a gesture. She murmured something to her mother, both ladies rose, and, turning their backs on Belever, without a word or sign, they joined the crowd moving from the room.

The lamps in the long, white house were nearly all extinguished when at last Belever went to bed, but not to sleep. As soon as it was light next morning, he was dressed and out, and, taking a small boat on the beach, he pulled out beyond the tiny pier that forms the harbor of Amalfi. Resting on his oars, he looked up to the quaint, white hotel.  
Suddenly a window was thrown open and a graceful figure, dressed in some loose, white morning wrapper, stepped out on the balcony. It was she! Belever's heart beat fast as he looked up at the girl he had loved at first sight standing with one little hand shading her eyes from the sun, drinking in the beauty of the scene. Presently she looked down, and it seemed into his very eyes. He thought she recognized him, for with an impatient movement she hastily went in, closing the window after her.  
Dejectedly Belever rowed ashore and mounted the long flights of steps to the hotel. He thought of packing up his things at once and finding another lodging until his own place should be ready for habitation; but a certain obstinacy in his nature held him from his course. After all, was he so much to blame? Had he done a thing too bad for forgiveness? If he frankly apologized to the ladies, ought they not to forget his impulsive error of taste and receive him again on a footing of friendship? He determined to seize the first opportunity for an explanation.  
He had not long to wait, for as he was passing down the long corridor on his way to the salle-a-manger for breakfast a door opened in front of him and Lesley herself appeared.  
"Miss Fleetwood—" He had begun appealingly, when she turned on him a look so full of resentment that the words died on his lips. She passed him with a hardening of the dainty features and her pretty chin in the air. Belever felt back, biting his lip. At the next two or three hours he wandered wretchedly about the ancient town and presently found himself again at the little port, where he began to talk with one of the Italian masons employed on the works for strengthening the pier. Suddenly this man broke off in an explanation he was giving of the means by which they transported and sunk the heavy blocks of concrete and raised a warning finger. With startled eyes he was looking up at the great cliff that rose above the harbor.  
"Did you hear that, signore?" he

asked in an awed whisper. "It is the mountain working. That is the third time since breakfast I have heard it crack and strain. At six this morning the Hotel Santa Caterina cracked."  
"Good heavens! Do you mean that the cliff will fall?"  
"I think there is great danger, signore. We have had a fortnight's rain, and the building of the Hotel Santa Caterina there has weakened the base of the mountain. I shall go and call the syndic."  
Far above him Belever could see that many persons had come out of the Hotel Cappuccini and were assembled on the terrace looking toward the overhanging part of the mountain. He recognized the flowing whiskers of old Signor Vozzi, the landlord, and could see the white aprons and the bright dresses of the servants mingling with the darker costumes of the hotel guests. Then, on the terrace to the left of the house, beyond the cloisters, just under the grotto, he detected a gleam of poppy color, and, staring hard, he recognized Lesley Fleetwood, walking slowly up and down, all unconscious of the danger that threatened her.

With a shout, Belever started for the grotto. It was approached by a long flight of steps which turned two or three times until they reached the terrace of the grotto.  
The girl looked up suddenly, and her face flushed. She turned from him impatiently.  
"Miss Fleetwood, there is great danger; the mountain will fall," he panted excitedly. "You must come at once."  
"Must!" repeated the girl, with a surprised lifting of the eyebrows.  
"This is no time for ceremony," he answered; "the peril is near. Your mother and everyone has run out from the hotel."  
"Are you afraid?" She looked at him half mockingly, half disdainfully.  
"I am afraid for you. I entreat you to come at once!"  
"Thank you. I prefer to stay where I am, and to be alone."  
With this there came from above a shower of loose stones and dust that poured from the edge of the cliff over their heads.

"You see!" he cried. "My witness." "Nonsense!" said Lesley, sharply. "A servant told me those statocites and things always fall after rain. Pray lose no time in saving yourself from the terrible danger!"  
Down came another stone. There was a strange sound, mysterious, indescribable, that came from the mountain. It was as if a giant imprisoned inside were stirring cautiously.  
The man and the girl looked into each other's eyes, defiance in hers, pleading in his. But suddenly a hot wave seemed to rush through Belever's veins. With a wild shout from below ringing in his ears, he caught the girl in his arms as if she had been a child. The mountain groaned. Belever sprang from under the arch of the grotto and, as if that fettered giant grudged the loss of his prey, there came a great roaring, which filled the air and confused the young man's senses. With a tremendous crash, a huge mass of rock plumed down from the foot of the grotto upon the very spot where, an instant ago, the two had stood, smashing into fragments the concrete pavement of the platform. The ground shook under Belever's feet; the earth seemed to quake as if it were turned to a

soft dusk, the peace, the faint suggestion of incense, the lighted candles—in honor of the Christmas season—on the altar, and dotted about among the quaint little oriental figures of the "crib," or "presepio," all seemed unreal, a mirage of peace in the presence of great danger. The rushing noise, like an advancing tidal wave, grew louder. From the doorway through which he had just come Belever could see what was happening. He saw a huge flying boulder strike the roof of the hotel, crush it in, and break away the wall beneath, as if of the solid, ancient structure, which had weathered the storms of 800 years, had been a house of cards, set up by the hands of a child.  
For a moment he believed that the whole building would go, and the girl he loved with all. But he heard the thunder of the landslide as it swept down to the sea, engulfing the Santa Caterina, as it went and throwing a towering wall of water that rushed in upon the beach. Then a great silence fell, broken only by the far-away shouting of human voices sounding strangely small and feeble after nature's savage uproar. Nothing more happened. They were saved.

Lesley had clung to him speechless, almost breathless, and Belever had clasped her tightly, hardly knowing how tightly. But now he gently released her. As he did so, she fell away from him, half fainting, and he caught her again, with his arm round her waist.  
"For heaven's sake, tell me that you're not hurt—that no stone struck you as we came," he stammered.  
"No," she whispered, for all strength was gone from her, and she could not speak aloud. "No—but you—there's a streak of blood on your forehead. Oh, how can I ever forgive myself? You might have been killed. It was all—my fault. I was a wretch. You ought to have gone and left me."  
"I'd rather have been killed than do that," said Belever. He had forgotten to let her go. She had forgotten to draw herself away, and so they still stood together, these two enemies, she leaning slightly against him, he with his arm round her waist.  
"Oh, why do you say that?" she faltered. "I was so obstinate—so wicked. I deserved anything. I wonder you cared."  
"But you see, I loved you," said Belever, quite simply. "If the end had to come I wanted it to come for me, too." It did not seem in the least strange that he should be telling her this, though she had never seen him until yesterday and had refused to speak to him this morning. They had known each other always, now, and they could never go back to being strangers again.

She did not answer, or even appear surprised; but, when her eyes left his they wandered all about the chapel, thinking how beautiful it looked and how sacred it seemed and how good it was to be there.  
"I hope—" she began; but what she hoped Belever was not to know, for a pale woman appeared at the door leading into the chapel from the hotel opposite the entrance from the cloisters, and, at the sight of the two figures standing together in the jeweled twilight broke into sobs.  
"Lesley—thank heaven!" she ejaculated. "I've searched everywhere for you. They tried to keep me from coming back to the house, but I would." Lesley ran to her mother. "He saved my life," she said.  
The elder woman held out both her hands to him.

"How can I thank you?" she cried. "By forgiving me—if you will." He spoke to her, but he looked at Lesley.  
"We start newly from this moment," said the girl. Her eyes were wonderfully soft and sweet in the chapel's dusk, jeweled by the candle lights.  
"Come away quickly," implored her mother. "Who knows yet if it is safe even here? It has all been so sudden, so horrible. I saw everything from the terrace—the peasants fishing over the cliff from above, the fishing boats crushed—oh, I shall dream of it always. Signora Vozzi says, even if all is well after this, every one must leave the hotel as soon as we can get our things together. Do come!"  
She turned toward the door again, drawing Lesley with her. Belever followed and at the door Lesley turned back. He hardly dared to believe that he had read aright what her eyes said.

jelly. Deafened, half blind, unable to think, he still ran on, Lesley quiet as death against his shoulder.  
Running down the few steps toward the hotel, which lay below the grotto in the rock, he reached the cloisters. Something seemed compelling him to look up. The whole mountain appeared to be falling. In the midst of a rushing mass from above three human figures detached themselves, shooting downward, limp as dolls made of rags, yet dignified into supreme tragedy.  
"A few seconds and we shall be like that," were the words that flashed through Belever's brain. Still, though he was hopeless now, instinct made him run on—for dear life.

Hardly had the thought of what might come printed itself before his eyes, when the whole great, overhanging mass of cliff broke away and fell headlong.  
"Now they were in the chapel. It was like a dream to be there. The



soft dusk, the peace, the faint suggestion of incense, the lighted candles—in honor of the Christmas season—on the altar, and dotted about among the quaint little oriental figures of the "crib," or "presepio," all seemed unreal, a mirage of peace in the presence of great danger. The rushing noise, like an advancing tidal wave, grew louder. From the doorway through which he had just come Belever could see what was happening. He saw a huge flying boulder strike the roof of the hotel, crush it in, and break away the wall beneath, as if of the solid, ancient structure, which had weathered the storms of 800 years, had been a house of cards, set up by the hands of a child.

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## Christmas Eve in Havana

It is the Real Holiday Time of the Season and Enjoyed in Full Measure.  
Up and down the Prado, that most beautiful of boulevards, which extends from the bay through the heart of the city, people in gay attire promenaded. Here and there a boy or man carried a pig which squealed vociferously, apparently aware that its time had come. Pig is the Christmas dish of the Cubans, just as the turkey comes in for

similar honors in the States. All along the boulevard and throughout the city the open cafes, brilliantly lighted, were filled with people eating and drinking, laughing and talking, the outer rows of tables so close to the walks that one could reach in and touch the diners as he passed, and there are no walls between the cafes and the streets. Huge automatic pianos drawn on wheels from place to place played here and there, while the boys attending them, entering the cafes, passed their ragged caps about

Beggars lounged up and down in front of the cafes, holding out their dirty hands for alms, and occasionally going inside to solicit from table to table.—W. A. Chamberlain in the New York Evening Post.

## To Tax Advertising Signs.

A bill to tax advertising signs and billboards at least thirty cents a square foot in cities of the first class, and twenty cents and ten cents, respectively, in cities of the second class

and in all other places, will be reintroduced in the legislature two months hence, says the New York Times. If these minimal sums fall below ten per cent of the rental value, the tax increases to this ratio, and remains constant even though the advertising device displayed within the assessed space shall be changed from time to time. The tax will not constitute a license. If a statute or ordinance forbids the placing of such signs, it shall not be construed as permitting their erection or maintenance,