

**WIGGIN KATE
SMITH**

A CATHEDRAL COURTSHIP

Kate Wiggin

A Cathedral Courtship

«Public Domain»

Wiggin K.

A Cathedral Courtship / K. Wiggin — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

PREFACE	7
A CATHEDRAL COURTSHIP	8
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	15

Kate Douglas Smith Wiggin

A Cathedral Courtship



'Jack! Jack! save me!'

PREFACE

'A Cathedral Courtship' was first published in 1893, appearing in a volume with 'Penelope's English Experiences.' In course of time, the latter story, finding unexpected favour in the public eyes, left its modest companion, and was promoted to a separate existence, with pictures and covers of its own. Then something rather curious occurred, one of those trifles which serve to make a publisher's life an exciting, if not a happy, one. When the 'gentle reader' (bless his or her warm and irrational heart!) could no longer buy 'A Cathedral Courtship,' a new desire for it sprang into being, and when the demands became sufficiently ardent and numerous, it was decided to republish the story, with illustrations by Mr. Charles E. Brock, an artist who can be relied upon to put new energy into a live tale or resuscitate a dead one.

At this point the author, having presumably grown in knowledge of grammar, spelling, and punctuation, was asked to revise the text, and being confronted with the printed page, was overcome by the temptation to add now and then a sentence, line, or paragraph, while the charming shade of Miss Kitty Schuyler perched on every exclamation point, begging permission to say a trifle, just a trifle, more.

'You might allow me to explain myself just there,' she coaxed; 'and if you have told them all I was supposed to be thinking in Winchester or Salisbury or Oxford, why not tell them what I thought in Bath or Peterborough or Ely? It was awfully interesting!'

Jack Copley, too, clamoured to be heard still further on the subject of his true-love's charms, so the author yielded to this twofold pressure, and added a few corroborative details.

The little courtship, running its placid course through sleepy cathedral towns, has not been altered in the least by these new pages. It is only as if the story-teller, meeting a new pair of interested eyes, had almost unconsciously drifted into fresh confidences.

KATE DOUGLAS WIGGIN.

This is all quite true, and anyway we have said nothing that we are a bit ashamed of.

KITTY SCHUYLER

X

JACK COPLEY

Their mark.

London, July, 1901.

A CATHEDRAL COURTSHIP

She

*Winchester, May 28, –,
The Royal Garden Inn.*

We are doing the English cathedral towns, Aunt Celia and I. Aunt Celia has an intense desire to improve my mind. Papa told her, when we were leaving Cedarhurst, that he wouldn't for the world have it too much improved, and Aunt Celia remarked that, so far as she could judge, there was no immediate danger; with which exchange of hostilities they parted.

We are travelling under the yoke of an iron itinerary, warranted neither to bend nor break. It was made out by a young High Church curate in New York, and if it were a creed, or a document that had been blessed by all the bishops and popes, it could not be more sacred to Aunt Celia. She is awfully High Church, and I believe she thinks this tour of the cathedrals will give me a taste for ritual and bring me into the true fold. Mamma was a Unitarian, and so when she was alive I generally attended service at that church. Aunt Celia says it is not a Church; that the most you can say for it is that it is a 'belief' rather loosely and carelessly formulated. She also says that dear old Dr. Kyle is the most dangerous Unitarian she knows, because he has leanings towards Christianity.

Long ago, in her youth, Aunt Celia was engaged to a young architect. He, with his triangles and T-squares and things, succeeded in making an imaginary scale-drawing of her heart (up to that time a virgin forest, an unmapped territory), which enabled him to enter in and set up a pedestal there, on which he has remained ever since. He has been only a memory for many years, to be sure, for he died at the age of twenty-six, before he had had time to build anything but a livery stable and a country hotel. This is fortunate, on the whole, because Aunt Celia thinks he was destined to establish American architecture on a higher plane, rid it of its base, time-serving, imitative instincts, and waft it to a height where, in the course of centuries, it would have been revered and followed by all the nations of the earth.

I went to see the stable, after one of these Miriam-like flights of prophecy on the might-have-been. It isn't fair to judge a man's promise by one modest performance, and so I shall say nothing, save that I am sure it was the charm of the man that won my aunt's affection, not the genius of the builder.

This sentiment about architecture and this fondness for the very toppingest High Church ritual cause Aunt Celia to look on the English cathedrals with solemnity and reverential awe. She has given me a fat note-book, with 'Katharine Schuyler' stamped in gold letters on the Russia-leather cover, and a lock and key to conceal its youthful inanities from the general public. I am not at all the sort of girl who makes notes, and I have told her so; but she says that I must at least record my passing impressions, if they are ever so trivial and commonplace. She also says that one's language gains unconsciously in dignity and sobriety by being set down in black and white, and that a liberal use of pen and ink will be sure to chasten my extravagances of style.

I wanted to go directly from Southampton to London with the Abbotts, our ship friends, who left us yesterday. Roderick Abbott and I had had a charming time on board ship (more charming than Aunt Celia knows, because she was very ill, and her natural powers of chaperoning were severely impaired), and the prospect of seeing London sights together was not unpleasing; but Roderick Abbott is not in Aunt Celia's itinerary, which reads: 'Winchester, Salisbury, Bath, Wells, Gloucester, Oxford, London, Ely, Peterborough, Lincoln, York, Durham.' These are the cathedrals Aunt Celia's curate chose to visit, and this is the order in which he chose to visit them. Canterbury was too far east for him, and Exeter was too far west, but he suggests Ripon and Hereford if strength and time permit.

Aunt Celia is one of those persons who are born to command, and when they are thrown in contact with those who are born to be commanded all goes as merry as a marriage bell; otherwise not.

So here we are at Winchester; and I don't mind all the Roderick Abbots in the universe, now that I have seen the Royal Garden Inn, its pretty coffee-room opening into the old-fashioned garden, with its borders of clove-pinks, its aviaries, and its blossoming horse-chestnuts, great towering masses of pink bloom.

Aunt Celia has driven to St. Cross Hospital with Mrs. Benedict, an estimable lady tourist whom she 'picked up' *en route* from Southampton. I am tired, and stayed at home. I cannot write letters, because Aunt Celia has the guide-books, so I sit by the window in indolent content, watching the dear little school laddies, with their short jackets and wide white collars; they all look so jolly, and rosy, and clean, and kissable. I should like to kiss the chambermaid, too. She has a pink print dress, no fringe, thank goodness (it's curious our servants can't leave that deformity to the upper classes), but shining brown hair, plump figure, soft voice, and a most engaging way of saying 'Yes, miss? Anythink more, miss?' I long to ask her to sit down comfortably and be English while I study her as a type, but of course I mustn't. Sometimes I wish I could retire from the world for a season and do what I like, 'surrounded by the general comfort of being thought mad.'

An elegant, irreproachable, high-minded model of dignity and reserve has just knocked and inquired what we will have for dinner. It is very embarrassing to give orders to a person who looks like a Justice of the Supreme Court, but I said languidly:

'What would you suggest?'

'How would you like a clear soup, a good spring soup, to begin with, miss?'

'Very much.'

'And a bit of turbot next, miss, with anchovy sauce?'

'Yes, turbot, by all means,' I said, my mouth watering at the word.

'And what else, miss? Would you enjoy a young duckling, miss, with new potatoes and green peas?'

'Just the thing; and for dessert—' I couldn't think what I ought to order next in England, but the high-minded model coughed apologetically, and, correcting my language, said:

'I was thinking you might like gooseberry-tart and cream for a sweet, miss.'

Oh that I could have vented my New World enthusiasm in a sigh of delight as I heard those intoxicating words, heretofore met only in English novels!

'Ye—es,' I said hesitatingly, though I was palpitating with joy, 'I fancy we should like gooseberry-tart' (here a bright idea entered my mind); 'and perhaps, in case my aunt doesn't care for the gooseberry-tart, you might bring a lemon-squash, please.'

Now, I had never met a lemon-squash personally, but I had often heard of it, and wished to show my familiarity with British culinary art.

'It would 'ardly be a substitute for gooseberry-tart, miss; but shall I bring *one* lemon-squash, miss?'

'Oh, as to that, it doesn't matter,' I said haughtily; 'bring a sufficient number for two persons.'

* * * * *

Aunt Celia came home in the highest feather. She had twice been mistaken for an Englishwoman. She said she thought that lemon-squash was a drink; I thought, of course, it was a pie; but we shall find out at dinner, for, as I said, I ordered a sufficient number for two persons, and the head-waiter is not a personage who will let Transatlantic ignorance remain uninstructed.

At four o'clock we attended evensong at the cathedral. I shall not say what I felt when the white-surpliced boy choir entered, winding down those vaulted aisles, or when I heard for the first time that intoned service, with all its 'witchcraft of harmonic sound.' I sat quite by myself in a high carved oak

seat, and the hour was passed in a trance of serene delight. I do not have many opinions, it is true, but papa says I am always strong on sentiments; nevertheless, I shall not attempt to tell even what I feel in these new and beautiful experiences, for it has been better told a thousand times.



*"It would ardy be a substitute
for gooseberry-lart, miss;"*

There were a great many people at service, and a large number of Americans among them, I should think, though we saw no familiar faces. There was one particularly nice young man, who looked like a Bostonian. He sat opposite me. He didn't stare—he was too well bred, but when I looked the other way he looked at me. Of course, I could feel his eyes; anybody can—at least, any girl can; but I attended to every word of the service, and was as good as an angel. When the procession had filed out, and the last strain of the great organ had rumbled into silence, we went on a tour through the cathedral, a heterogeneous band, headed by a conscientious old verger, who did his best to enlighten us, and succeeded in virtually spoiling my pleasure.

After we had finished (think of 'finishing' a cathedral in an hour or two!), Aunt Celia and I, with one or two others, wandered through the beautiful close, looking at the exterior from every possible point, and coming at last to a certain ruined arch which is very famous. It did not strike me as being remarkable. I could make any number of them with a pattern without the least effort. But, at any rate, when told by the verger to gaze upon the beauties of this wonderful relic and tremble, we were obliged to gaze also upon the beauties of the aforesaid nice young man, who was sketching it.

As we turned to go away, Aunt Celia dropped her bag. It is one of those detestable, all-absorbing, all-devouring, thoroughly respectable, but never proud, Boston bags, made of black cloth with leather trimmings, 'C. Van T.' embroidered on the side, and the top drawn up with stout cords which pass over the Boston wrist or arm. As for me, I loathe them, and would not for worlds be seen carrying one, though I do slip a great many necessaries into Aunt Celia's.

I hastened to pick up the horrid thing, for fear the nice young man would feel obliged to do it for me; but, in my indecorous haste, I caught hold of the wrong end, and emptied the entire contents on the stone flagging. Aunt Celia didn't notice; she had turned with the verger, lest she should miss a single word of his inspired testimony. So we scrambled up the articles together, the nice young man and I; and oh, I hope I may never look upon his face again.

There were prayer-books and guide-books, a Bath bun, a bottle of soda-mint tablets, a church calendar, a bit of gray frizz that Aunt Celia pins into her cap when she is travelling in damp weather, a spectacle-case, a brandy-flask, and a bon-bon-box, which broke and scattered cloves and peppermint lozenges. (I hope he guessed Aunt Celia is a dyspeptic, and not intemperate!) All this was hopelessly vulgar, but I wouldn't have minded anything if there had not been a Duchess novel. Of course he thought that it belonged to me. He couldn't have known Aunt Celia was carrying it for that accidental Mrs. Benedict, with whom she went to St. Cross Hospital.

After scooping the cloves out of the cracks in the stone flagging—and, of course, he needn't have done this, unless he had an abnormal sense of humour—he handed me the tattered, disreputable-looking copy of 'A Modern Circe,' with a bow that wouldn't have disgraced a Chesterfield, and then went back to his easel, while I fled after Aunt Celia and her verger.

* * * * *

Memoranda: The Winchester Cathedral has the longest nave. The inside is more superb than the outside. Izaak Walton and Jane Austen are buried here.

He

*Winchester, May 28,
The White Swan.*

As sure as my name is Jack Copley, I saw the prettiest girl in the world to-day—an American, too, or I am greatly mistaken. It was in the cathedral, where I have been sketching for several days. I was sitting at the end of a bench, at afternoon service, when two ladies entered by the side-door.

The ancient maiden, evidently the head of the family, settled herself devoutly, and the young one stole off by herself to one of the old carved seats back of the choir. She was worse than pretty! I made a memorandum of her during service, as she sat under the dark carved-oak canopy, with this Latin inscription over her head:

Carlton cum

Dolby

Letania

IX Solidorum

Super Flumina

Confitebor tibi

Dūc probati

There ought to be a law against a woman's making a picture of herself, unless she is willing to allow an artist to 'fix her' properly in his gallery of types.

A black-and-white sketch doesn't give any definite idea of this charmer's charms, but sometime I'll fill it in—hair, sweet little hat, gown, and eyes, all in golden brown, a cape of tawny sable slipping off her arm, a knot of yellow primroses in her girdle, carved-oak background, and the afternoon sun coming through a stained-glass window. Great Jove! She had a most curious effect on me, that girl! I can't explain it—very curious, altogether new, and rather pleasant. When one of the choir-boys sang 'Oh for the wings of a dove!' a tear rolled out of one of her lovely eyes and down her smooth brown cheek. I would have given a large portion of my modest monthly income for the felicity of wiping away that teardrop with one of my new handkerchiefs, marked with a tremendous 'C' by my pretty sister.

An hour or two later they appeared again—the dragon, who answers to the name of 'Aunt Celia,' and the 'nut-brown mayde,' who comes when she is called 'Katharine.' I was sketching a ruined arch. The dragon dropped her unmistakably Boston bag. I expected to see encyclopædias and Russian tracts fall from it, but was disappointed. The 'nut-brown mayde' (who has been trained in the way she should go) hastened to pick up the bag for fear that I, a stranger, should serve her by doing it. She was punished by turning it inside out, and I was rewarded by helping her gather together the articles, which were many and ill-assorted. My little romance received the first blow when I found that she reads the Duchess novels. I think, however, she has the grace to be ashamed of it, for she blushed scarlet when I handed her 'A Modern Circe.' I could have told her that such a blush on such a cheek would almost atone for not being able to read at all, but I refrained. It is vexatious all the same, for, though one doesn't expect to find perfection here below, the 'nut-brown mayde,' externally considered, comes perilously near it. After she had gone I discovered a slip of paper which had blown under some stones.

It proved to be an itinerary. I didn't return it. I thought they must know which way they were going; and as this was precisely what I wanted to know, I kept it for my own use. She is doing the cathedral towns. I am doing the cathedral towns. Happy thought! Why shouldn't we do them together—we and Aunt Celia? A fellow whose mother and sister are in America must have some feminine society!

I had only ten minutes to catch my train for Salisbury, but I concluded to run in and glance at the registers of the principal hotels. Found my 'nut-brown mayde' at once in the guest-book of the Royal Garden Inn: 'Miss Celia Van Tyck, Beverly, Mass., U.S.A. Miss Katharine Schuyler, New York, U.S.A.' I concluded to stay over another train, ordered dinner, and took an altogether indefensible and inconsistent pleasure in writing 'John Quincy Copley, Cambridge, Mass.,' directly beneath the charmer's autograph.

* * * * *

She

*Salisbury, June 1,
The White Hart Inn.*

We left Winchester on the 1.16 train yesterday, and here we are within sight of another superb and ancient pile of stone. I wanted so much to stop at the Highflyer Inn in Lark Lane, but Aunt Celia said that if we were destitute of personal dignity, we at least owed something to our ancestors. Aunt Celia has a temperamental distrust of joy as something dangerous and ensnaring. She doesn't realize what fun it would be to date one's letters from the Highflyer Inn, Lark Lane, even if one were obliged to consort with poachers and trippers in order to do it.

Better times are coming, however, for she was in a melting mood last evening, and promised me that wherever I can find an inn with a picturesque and unusual name, she will stop there, provided it is clean and respectable, if I on my part will agree to make regular notes of travel in my Russia-leather book. She says that ever since she was my age she has asked herself nightly the questions Pythagoras was in the habit of using as a nightcap:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.