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The Prince of Peace



A Drama in Three Acts

BY

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THE ACTS.

Time, Two Hours.

Act One.

SCENE: Office of the Carroll Soap Co., New York.
TIME: Christmas Eve.

Act Two.

SCENE: Richard Reinhardt's home in New York.
TIME: That night.

Act Three.

SCENE: Living Room in home of John Wagner, Mayor of Helena, Mont.
TIME: New Year's Eve.

NOTE: The name CHRISTKIND may be used very successfully in some communities instead of the Christchild.

The directions to right and left used in this play should be considered as facing audience.

ACT ONE

SETTINGS AND PROPERTIES

Scene: Office of the Carroll Soap Co., New York City.

Time: Christmas Eve.

Door to outside in center of back wall. Double door is preferable.

Door marked "Shipping Department" in the center of right wall.

Door marked "Private Office" in center of left wall.

Windows in the right center and left center of back wall. May be blank.

Rug on floor if convenient.

Files at right wall to back.

Stenographer's desk at right center to front of stage.

Bookkeeper's desk between right window and outside door in rear.

Clothes tree left of outside door in rear.

Table for Office Boy in rear left center in front of window.

Manager's flat desk in center of stage, little to left, facing right wall.

Chairs at all desks and extra one at Manager's desk.

Radiator at left wall to front.

Waste paper baskets containing some waste paper, at all desks.

Typewriter with cover on Stenographer's desk. Also papers, carbons, note book, files, etc.

Inks, pens, pencils, books and files on bookkeeper's desk.

Circulars and envelopes on office boy's table.

Telephone, ink, pens, pencils, cigars, matches, papers, envelopes, check book, wire mail-basket containing some stamped envelopes on Manager's desk.

Calendar on back wall showing month.

One office coat, one overcoat for manager, one overcoat for Tom, one for Miss Jones, one coat and rubbers for Miss Meyer, hats for all, and everything on clothes tree.

When curtain rises, Stenographer and Bookkeeper busy at their desks, Tom at table folding circulars.

Have auto horn and whistles back of scene for effect, gauntlets and goggles for chauffeur, a dinner pail, dust pan and sweeping brush for janitor; papers for Jim, Tom and Manager, and newspaper for Marie.

EFFECTS

When Tom says: "Same to you, Mr. Goodwin," whistle heard off outside door. After Manager says: "Yes, we are too full of sin to see," auto horn heard off outside door. Auto horn also heard after exit of Marie.

After Manager says: "I must see Dick tonight," noise off shipping-room.

See dialogue for musical effects.

ACT TWO

SETTINGS AND PROPERTIES

Scene: Home of Richard Reinhardt in New York City.

Time: The same night.

Door to outside in center of right wall. Hooks for clothes near same, Dick's overcoat on same.

Door to bedroom in center of left wall.

Window frosted at bottom in center of back wall. This may be made by rubbing white paste on screen. Window should have curtain to draw up or should open.

Blue light for night effect behind this, if convenient.

Small square table left of window at back.

Kitchen table in center of stage. Old table-cloth on same. Three plain chairs at table. One chair at center of right wall.

Old style kitchen stove at left wall to front.

Cupboard at left wall to rear. Alarm clock on same.

Old kitchen lamp on kitchen table. Bread, 3 cups, 3 saucers, 3 plates, 3 knives, 3 forks, 3 spoons for soup, bowl of soup with large soup spoon in center of table, 3 small bowls on plates; other food on table, also plate of crackers, butter, end of loaf of bread and bread-knife. Meal set for three.

Coffee pot and kettle on stove. Coffee steaming. Apron for Helen hung up near stove.

Revolver, plates, clean table-cloth, box containing Christmas tree trimmings, small candles with holders for tree, and a picture of the Christchild to hang on tip. Also large candle in holder to set on table at window. Have all this in or on cupboard.

Also newspapers, pipe, tobacco, matches, tablet and pencil in cupboard. Have split cord-wood and small Christmas tree on stand at right, behind scene.

At rise of curtain, Richard Reinhardt seen at kitchen table eating supper.

THE VISION

SETTINGS AND PROPERTIES

At midnight angels seen peeping through window, then door in right wall of Richard Reinhardt's home is opened by leader angel who stands guard at same while small angels dance or drill in drawing sleigh on which the Christchild is seated.

Spotlight to shine on the Christchild from left door as he enters.

Sleigh on which the Christchild sits may be an ordinary baby sled painted and decorated with white cloth and tinsel. Pine branches should also be used.

Have candy, nuts and small toys in sled to be given to the angels by the Christchild.

At entrance of the angels, music very soft—"Silent Night."

EFFECTS

See dialogue for musical effects.

Noise of footsteps off right, after Dick says: "Just like mother used to do it at home; it's a beautiful old custom."

Have five bundles at right behind scene for Edward Wagner when he enters in 2nd act. One bundle must contain a beautiful large doll, one a new dress for Marie and the others may be dummies.

When Dick says: "Say, I'll bet it will be the greatest surprise of their lives," give sound of church bells or of midnight chimes. Phono-

graph record will give desired effect. Get "Adeste Fidelis" in chimes.

When Helen turns down lamp, other light out.

Spotlight shines on the Christchild from left door as he enters.

ACT THREE

SETTINGS AND PROPERTIES

Scene: Living room in home of John Wagner, mayor of Helena, Montana.

Time: New Year's Eve.

House decorated with holly and mistletoe.

Exterior door in left wall.

Door to dining room in right wall.

French windows right center in back wall. Mountain scene behind these, if convenient (*not necessary.*)

Blue lights in front of this to give night effect.

Snow seen falling behind French windows at rise of curtain.

Fireplace at right wall to front. Red tissue paper in front of light therein to give effect of fire or have red light covered with white tissue paper, cord wood on tissue paper.

Rocking chair and one ordinary chair at fireplace.

Chandelier with electric lights to hang from center if possible.

Settee, if desired, to rear in front of French windows.

Library table in center to front of stage.

Box of cigars on table and matches.

Piano at left wall to front and stool or bench for same. Music cabinet beside same, to rear.

Chair at left wall in front of piano.

Christmas tree on table or floor at left of French windows to rear.

Colored electric lights on Christmas tree. Decorations, trimmings, etc., also on tree.

Three plates filled with candy, nuts, etc., beneath tree.

Toy aeroplane, steam engine, sled, skates, rocking horse, large doll and bed for same, all around tree.

Bells or auto horn behind scene for effect. Bell for door bell effect.

Bells, whistles and chimes for New Year's effect. Bell or chime effect may be same as in act two. Phonograph record of "Rock of Ages" or some other suitable piece played with chimes will give good results. Clock to strike twelve, if desired. Wind machine for effect. Artificial or natural snow, if possible on all who enter from without. Revolver and blank cartridges for New Year's effect or imitate the sound of shots by slapping two boards together, behind scenes.

EFFECTS

Snow seen falling behind French windows at rise of curtain.

Door bell after Kate says: "Please don't John."

Wind effect after children get through singing, and after Grandpa says: "I don't see how a man could be in New York all this time without getting married."

Sleigh bells or auto horn after Grandma says: "Yes, Henry, I am happier, etc."

Clock strikes twelve. Whistles, shots and bells heard after Marie says: "Gee, I guess you kids never lived in New York."
All but bells cease after everyone but Edward and Catherine is out.
Bells until end but very faintly.
See dialogue for musical effect.

COSTUMES AND PROPERTIES OF CHARACTERS

THE CHRISTCHILD—Soft white dress with gold trimmings.

ANGELS—Fluffy, filmy white gowns, with slippers and stockings of white. Neck and arms bare, hair flowing. To the back of gowns, between shoulders are fastened wings made by gathering a yard and a half of dress material in the middle, to about four inches in length, and sewing this gathered portion to the center of back of dress, between sleeves. At the upper tip of each wing is fastened a brass ring, which slips over the finger, thus manipulating the wings with every movement of the arms.

EDWARD WAGNER, MANAGER—About thirty. Must be dressed in business suit in first act, have grey hair at temples and wrinkles. Paper money in pockets. Hat, overcoat and office coat on clothes tree in office. Papers in inside coat pocket. Binder in hand on second entrance. Wears overcoat on entrance in second and third act; well dressed in third.

TOM, THE OFFICE BOY—Clean, ordinary clothes. Must have some change in his pocket and an overcoat and hat or cap on clothes tree in office.

MISS JONES, STENOGRAPHER—Girl about twenty, neatly dressed, and must have a hat and overcoat on clothes tree. Must type-write during performance. Have purse containing change on desk.

MISS MEYER, BOOKKEEPER—Girl about twenty-five, neatly dressed. Pencil stuck in hair, coat and hat on clothes tree. May have rubbers also. Purse containing change on desk.

JIM, SHIPPING CLERK—About twenty-five. Must be in overalls, and look shabby and tired. Sleeves rolled up, arms and hands soiled. Have papers in hand on first entrance.

JOE, JANITOR (Colored)—Elderly man, grey wig, dressed in shabby, unpressed clothes, black shirt and cap. Brings in sweeping brush and dust pan. Must also have dinner pail, overcoat and hat when he leaves at end of first act.

MR. GOODWIN, CHARITY MAN—Handsomely dressed. Comes in with hat and overcoat on. Calling cards in pocket.

MARIE REINHARDT—Little girl about six years old, poorly dressed. Holes in stockings, hair careless, wears mittens, red cap and white shawl around neck. Carries one newspaper in hand. Shoes also soiled. Well dressed in act three.

CHAUFFEUR—Wears goggles, overcoat and gauntlets.

HELEN REINHARDT—Woman about thirty. Poorly but neatly dressed in second act. Well dressed in third act.

RICHARD REINHARDT—Man about thirty-five. Wears plain soft collar shirt, plain, unpressed coat and trousers. Hair unkempt in second act. Must have overcoat and hat hanging on stage hooks. Well dressed in act three.

MRS. MURPHY, neighbor of Reinhardts in New York. Middle-aged

woman, poorly but neatly dressed. Must speak Irish brogue and have a small package in her hand when she enters. Appears in second act only.

GRANDPA REINHARDT—Appears in 3rd act only. Old man, about sixty. White beard and wig. Clothes dark. White collar. Black tie. Old style shoes. Should smoke corn cob pipe, and have matches in pocket.

CATHERINE REINHARDT—Appears in 3rd act only. Woman about twenty-eight. Well dressed. Should sing or play piano.

GRANDMA WAGNER—Appears in last act only. Old woman about sixty. Grey or white hair. Dressed in plain black. Old style shoes. May wear white cap and fichu.

JOHN WAGNER—Appears in last act only. Man about thirty-five. Well dressed. Should sing. May wear mustache.

GERTRUDE WAGNER—Woman about thirty. Well dressed. Should play piano or sing.

MENA, SERVANT—Girl about thirty. Foreign. Neatly dressed in plain black and white. Speaks German brogue.

TELEGRAPH MESSENGER—Wears overcoat and A. D. T. cap.

CHILDREN OF JOHN WAGNER—Well dressed.

ACT ONE.

Scene: Office of the Carroll Soap Co., New York City.

Time: Christmas Eve.

TOM (*Office Boy. At his table putting circulars in envelopes*): This job is too much for me. I'll never finish it tonight. It's Christmas Eve at that. Gee! I wish I were home now (*Grunts.*) And it takes the car an hour and a half to get there!

MISS JONES (*Stenographer*): Well, do all you can, Tom. You may go as soon as the whistle blows.

(*Enter Jim from Shipping Room whistling*)

JIM: Please send this bill of lading to the Northern Oil Co., Miss Jones; it's got to go out tonight.

MISS JONES: All right, Jim; is that all you have?

JIM: Yes, that'll be all for tonight, I think.

MISS JONES: Good. We'll get out early.

TOM: What time are you going to finish tonight, Jim?

JIM: Oh, about seven. What are you worrying about? Come out and help me juggle around some of those barrels.

TOM: Not me, I haven't got the strength in the arms. I've got it all in the brain.

JIM: You stick around this place much longer and you'll be weak in the brain and strong in the arms. (*Exit Jim, shipping room.*)

TOM (*Sitting at Manager's desk*): Here's the way the Boss dictates a letter. (*Roughly pulls out board of desk. In deep voice*): Missouri Credit Co., St. Louis, Missouri. Gentlemen: Enclosed find statement for J. M. Walsh, Manager Saratoga Hotel—

(*Manager slowly coming in from shipping room with back to audience, while still in doorway.*)

MANAGER: Get that order out tonight, Jim; it's got to go! (*Turns and closes door. When Manager turns, Tom is at his own desk.*)

MANAGER (*handing binder to Miss Meyer*): Foot today's sales before you go, Miss Meyer. (*Exit, shipping room.*)

TOM: Gee, that was a close call. It's a good thing he didn't catch me at it.

MISS MEYER: Where's your stenographer?

TOM: Gone through the floor. (*Laughs.*) I guess I'll not send that letter today.

MISS JONES: Better be careful, Tom, or you'll get yours.

(*Enter Mr. Goodwin, Exterior door.*)

MR. GOODWIN (*Goes to Tom's table*): Is the manager in, please?

TOM: Yes, sir; he's out in the shipping room; I'll call him. (*Exit Tom, shipping room.*)

MR. GOODWIN: Thank you. Pretty nice Christmas evening, isn't

it, girls? I'm glad the snow is on the ground so we can hear the sleigh bells again. But it's getting pretty cold.

MISS JONES: Oah! (*shivers*) Is that right? Of course, we don't hear many sleigh-bells around here. This is the motor age, you know.

MR. GOODWIN: Yes, that's true, but there is nothing like a good old sleigh-ride.

MISS MEYER: I agree with you there. What are you selling today, sleighs?

MR. GOODWIN: Oh, no! I'm on the committee of Good Fellowship. We are going to give a dinner for the newsboys. Here's my card. (*Hands card to Miss Meyer.*)

MISS MEYER (*taking card*): Well, isn't that fine!

MR. GOODWIN: Yes, I've come to ask the manager for a donation. You girls can give something if you wish.

MISS JONES: Sure, I'll be glad to. (*Gets money from her purse.*) Here you are.

MISS MEYER (*takes money from her purse*): Here, take this, too. I feel sorry for the poor newsies.

MR. GOODWIN: Girls, I thank you very much. I'm sure if you could see those happy children at the dinner, you would feel repaid.

MISS JONES: Oh, don't worry about that.

(*Enter Tom from Shipping Room.*)

TOM: He'll be here in a minute, sir. (*Hands binder to Miss Jones.*) Here is something else for you, Miss Jones, from Jim. He said that had to go, too.

MISS MEYER: Tom, would you like to give something for the newsies' Christmas dinner?

TOM: Sure; who'll I give it to.

MISS MEYER: Give it to the gentleman over there. (*Points to Mr. Goodwin.*)

MR. GOODWIN: Goodwin is my name.

TOM (*Gets change out of his pocket*): Here, is this enough, Mr. Goodwin?

MR. GOODWIN: Sure, anything. Thank you.

TOM: Not at all, sir. Wish I had more to give.

(*Enter manager from Shipping Room and goes toward Mr. Goodwin.*)

MANAGER (*in bad mood*): Did you wish to see me?

MR. GOODWIN: Yes, sir. I am on the Good-Fellowship committee. We are taking up a collection for the newsies' Christmas dinner and I thought you might like to give—

MANAGER: No, we can't help anybody with Christmas dinners. We don't take time for such humbug. We've got troubles enough of our own.

MR. GOODWIN: I beg your pardon, sir, but couldn't you give just a dollar or two. I'm sure you wouldn't miss it.

MANAGER: I said NO! (*Leaves.*)

MR. GOODWIN: Well, I am sorry to have troubled, but I wish you a Merry Christmas just the same.

(*Exit Manager, private office, slamming door, without returning wish.*)

MR. GOODWIN (*to office force, cracks a joke about manager, as*): That man would make a good substitute for vinegar. Well, Merry Christmas, everybody!

GIRLS: Merry Christmas!

TOM: Same to you, Mr. Goodwin. (*Exit Mr. Goodwin, exterior door. Whistles are heard blowing. Girls put away their work.*)

MISS MEYER (*putting books on Manager's desk*): There go the whistles!

MISS JONES: I pity those poor "Good Fellows" getting such a reception.

MISS MEYER: Wasn't it an awful turndown? Mr. Wagner certainly is a bear. If he doesn't change his ways soon, I'm going to leave. This is getting on my nerves. (*Hands papers to Miss Jones.*)

MISS JONES: Mine, too— I'll not stay here much longer.

TOM: Please don't quit your jobs, girls. I don't want to be here all alone. Gee! wouldn't it be lonesome!

MISS MEYER: Never mind, there'll be someone to fill our places, Tom.

TOM: Yes, but they might not treat me as well as you do.

MISS JONES: Thanks, Tom. I guess we'll be here as long as you will.

MISS MEYER: Do you know, Jennie, Christmas is not what it used to be. It seems to have lost all its charm. It's not the way the old folks used to celebrate it. When I was a child, we always believed that the Christchild came at midnight on a golden sleigh and brought candy and playthings with him for all the good children. We used to set out plates under the Christmas tree and go to bed early. And the next morning,—what a surprise? They were always filled. How wonderful it seemed that the poor little Christchild could give us so many nice things; but mother would tell us that He is God and nothing is impossible for Him; and so we learned to love Him more each day.

MISS JONES: What a beautiful custom! Too bad not everybody follows it nowadays. I think that is why Christmas has become a burden to some folks. If they would realize that all these blessings come because of the Christchild, they would indeed be happy.

MISS MEYER: Yes, the struggle and strife in this life is but a school for us, and when we have learned the true principle of happiness, we come to realize that it was all for the best. The wonderful light of truth in the teachings of Jesus turns all cares into joys.

MISS JONES: You surely have a consoling view of life. We must learn the true principle of happiness to be happy, just as we must learn the right principle of an engine before we can make one that will go. Everything works for our good.

MISS MEYER: That's why we keep up this good old custom. The children still set their plates under the Christmas tree and the little Christchild comes while they are asleep and fills them with candy and playthings.

MISS JONES: What a beautiful symbol of the Great Giver. You must surely enjoy it.

MISS MEYER: I should say we do.

TOM: We all celebrate Christmas the same way at home.

MISS JONES: Is that right?

TOM: Yes, sure we do.

MISS JONES: Isn't that great! I wish Mr. Wagner would think that way. He can't bear the sound of Christmas.

MISS MEYER: He must have forgotten about his childhood, in the restless whirl of business.

MISS JONES: That is perhaps the trouble with him and with most folks of his kind, for I don't see how any Christian who believes as you do could be so mean. It is a pity that the children are not taught the true cause of their joy, that all their presents really come from the dear little Christchild. Surely it is His spirit in us that prompts the giving.

MISS MEYER: Yes, indeed! (*Goes to her desk and gets binder.*)

MISS JONES: Well, we're staying overtime. I'm going to tell the folks about that beautiful custom of yours. That's what I call a real Christmas.

MISS MEYER (*puts binder on Manager's desk and then puts on rubbers*): Are you coming with me? Come on, we'll ride together.

MISS JONES: Yes, just a minute. (*Puts cover on typewriter.*)

TOM: I've got to stay awhile yet till Jim gets out that order. (*Helps Miss Jones with wraps.*)

MISS JONES (*puts on wraps*): Well, Merry Christmas, Tom; hope you'll get lots of presents. (*Offers him her hand. Puts papers on manager's desk.*)

TOM (*shaking hands cordially*): Thanks, same to you.

MISS MEYER (*about to go.*) (*Teasing*): Go to bed early to-night Tom, and be sure to put your plate under the Christmas tree.

(*Miss Jones picks up mail and carries it out.*)

TOM (*laughs*): Yes, Miss Meyer, I will. Merry Christmas.

MISS MEYER: Same to you, thank you.

(*Exit Miss Jones and Miss Meyer, exterior door.*)

(*Enter Manager from private office with papers.*)

MANAGER: Tom, take this out to the shipping room.

TOM: Yes, sir. (*Exit Tom, shipping room.*)

MANAGER: Some more nonsense, having that boy around here,—a lot of extra expense. Guess I'll let him go.

(*Enter Tom from shipping room.*)

MANAGER: Tom!

TOM: Yes, sir.

MANAGER (*goes to his desk, sits down and writes check*): You better get another job. We have no more use for you. How much have you coming this week?

TOM: Three dollars, sir. Why?

MANAGER (*After writing out check, rises and hands it to Tom*): Well, here you are.

TOM: You don't mean to say I'm to go, do you? (*Takes check.*)

MANAGER: That's exactly what I mean. You've been fooling around here too long.

TOM: Please don't say that, Mr. Wagner. Don't tell me to go. I'll try to do better. I can't tell my mother tonight I've lost my job. Don't you know it's Christmas Eve?

MANAGER: That don't concern me. I can't use you any longer. Go now.

TOM (*putting on overcoat and hat and leaving despondently*): Well, I'd like to know what I've done.

(*Exit Tom, Exterior door.*)

MANAGER (*standing at desk*): Christmas! What does it con-

cern me. Nothing but giving presents. Nobody is satisfied.—When I think of what we used to get.—How the times have changed! Now it's Santa Claus, and he's got to have a gold mine to satisfy them all. I'm getting sick of this silly idea. It just knocks out another day for business, that's all. (*Seating himself at desk and looking over papers.*)

(*Enter Joe, the janitor, with sweeping brush from shipping room.*)

JOE: Well, Mr. Wagner, ain't yo gwine to go home fo' to-nite? Yo all know it's Christmas Ebe. (*Gathers papers from all baskets and puts in one of them.*)

MANAGER: Don't bother me. I'm busy.

JOE: All right, sah. But you all know ah was jes thinkin' of that thaah roast chicken, takin a bath in the cranberry sauce, that's all. (*Chuckling laugh.*)

MANAGER (*sharply*): Well, now, cut out the jokes. Get a move on.

JOE (*after gathering waste paper*): Say, sah, soon as yo' go, ah wants to wish yo a Merry Christmas.

MANAGER: Now, never mind that, I'm not going. (*Joe stops short, looks at Wagner in amazement and then exit with waste basket, shipping room.*)

MANAGER (*as Joe is leaving*): As a janitor, you're a joke.

(*Enter Jim from shipping room, goes to manager and leans hand on his desk.*)

JIM: Well, I guess we're about finished for tonight.

MANAGER: It's about time. Have you got Fisher's order out?

JIM: Why, no, the order read to be shipped on the twenty-seventh.

MANAGER: Well, get that out tonight. It's hard telling when it will go if you wait till then.

JIM: Why, it will take me till eleven o'clock to finish it. I haven't got enough help.

MANAGER (*angrily*): Well, what of it. It's got to be done. Don't be afraid of the help. (*Rises and gives Jim a light shove.*) I can get plenty of help that is willing to work for less.

JIM: I suppose I've got to do it then. (*Leaving.*) That means no Christmas Eve for me. (*Exit Jim, shipping room.*)

MANAGER. (*Sits at desk*): By Jove, I'll get all I can out of this business. I'll make 'em work. That's what they're getting paid for, Christmas or no Christmas. If the profits don't show fifty per cent increase this year, I'll cut down the wages or hire new help. I don't care what becomes of them. That's none of my concern.

JOE (*enters from shipping room with empty basket and places it in proper place*): Should ah put some moah coal on, Mister Wagner? It's gettin' mighty cold outside.

MANAGER: No, never mind. Save the coal.

JOE (*frightened*): Ye—Yes, sah. (*Exit Joe, shipping room.*)

MANAGER (*lights cigar. Then after looking at papers for a half minute, rises and walks the floor*): It's getting awfully quiet around here. Hasn't been so quiet for a long time. Queer I don't hear Jim. He must be in the basement. (*Goes toward window and looks out.*) Guess everybody has gone home. (*Gives a muffled laugh.*) Home! I had a home once and a friend,—Dick—I wonder whatever became

of him. But what's the use. Guess he wouldn't know me now. Haven't seen him for twelve years, since he and I left home. He must have been killed in the wreck. I suppose he was. Lucky I got out of it. I do wonder what has become of his sister Kate—Catherine Reinhardt. I loved her once, twelve years ago. But it's too late now, I suppose—Ah, what's the use. (*Sits down at his desk.*)

(*Enter Marie Reinhardt, exterior door.*)

MARIE: Paper, Mister! Paper! This is the last one I've got. Won't you buy it!

MANAGER: No, don't bother me; get out where you belong!

MARIE: Won't you please buy this last one, mister, only one cent.

MANAGER: Get out! I said. I'm busy!

MARIE: Gee whiz! Mister, can't I warm myself a little? It's awfully cold outside.

MANAGER: Well, that's different. Come here. (*Marie comes toward radiator and leaves paper on same.*)

MANAGER (*turns on chair and stares at her*): It's a wonder your parents wouldn't give you some decent clothes to put on in this kind of weather.

MARIE: 'Cause they hasn't got any themselves, that's why. Not everybody can wear nice things, you know. My Aunt Kate sent me this dress last Christmas. She lives way out in Helena, Montana, and the styles are much different there; but you can't keep things in style the whole year 'round.

MANAGER (*surprised*): Helena, my home town.

MARIE: Oh! The Christchild is coming tonight! I'm so glad. Maybe I'll get a new dress from Him.

MANAGER (*rising*): The Christchild! Why, little one do you believe the Christchild is coming tonight?

MARIE: Sure I do. I believe He's going to come and bring me a Christmas present, don't you?

MANAGER: I—yes, yes, of course. But what is your name, my child?

MARIE: My name is Marie Reinhardt.

MANAGER (*Pondering*): Reinhardt! Reinhardt! Could it be possible! (*Goes to her and stares at her.*) Why, she seem to resemble—where do you live?

MARIE: I live with my papa and mamma.

MANAGER: But where is that?

MARIE: On the sixth floor of the Broadway Flats.

MANAGER: How long have you lived there, my child?

MARIE: Ever since I was so high. (*Shows him with her hand.*)

MANAGER: But your father, is he acquainted in Helena, Montana?

MARIE: Yes, sir. He knows lots of people out there. That's where aunt Kitty lives. She gave me this dress last Christmas.

MANAGER: *Aunty Kitty*. Whom else does your father know in Helena?

MARIE: He knows Wagners.

MANAGER: Wagners! Is it really true? Does he know John Wagner, the Mayor?

MARIE: Yes, he knows them a long time. Papa used to live in Helena before he came here.

MANAGER: His name is Dick, isn't it?

MARIE: Some folks call him Dick, but his right name is Richard.

MANAGER (*Laughs*): Richard!—That's right! So you got that dress from your Aunt Kate, did you?

MARIE: Yes, sir. Don't you think it is nice? She made it all herself.

MANAGER: Well, well. (*Aside.*) Wonder what brought him to New York. (*To Marie.*) Tell me, what does your aunt Kitty do?

MARIE: Oh, she does lots of things. She's so nice. Grandma Wagner is nice, too. She gave me these mittens.

MANAGER: Dear old mother! Well, isn't that fine. How long have you been selling these papers, my child?

MARIE: Let me see— (*counts on fingers*) Thursday, Friday, Saturday—three days and I've made fifty cents. Isn't that a lot?

MANAGER: I suppose.

MARIE: You see, we are poor. Papa has been out of work for over a month and mamma is sick. She always coughs so much, and if it weren't for me selling these papers, we all would have to starve.

MANAGER: You must be tired, my child. (*Offers her chair.*) Sit down and warm yourself. It's awfully cold outside.

MARIE (*seating herself*): Yes, sir; yesterday I froze my big toe. (*Holding shoe child-like.*) Gee, it hurts.

MANAGER: What can I do for it, my child?

MARIE: Oh, nothing, sir; I guess it will be all right tomorrow.

MANAGER: Who taught you how to speak such good English?

MARIE: Mamma did. She teaches me something new every day.

MANAGER: Well! What does your father do?

MARIE: He used to be a shoemaker in the East River Factory, before the strike started. Now he doesn't do anything.

MANAGER (*putting right hand on back of her chair*): That's too bad. Well, little Marie, what would you like to have from the little Christchild tonight?

MARIE: Oh, I wish he would bring papa some work. But if he wants to give me something, too, I wish he would bring me a little doll to play with.

MANAGER: Is that all you want?

MARIE: I wish he would make mamma well, too. (*Rises and runs around front of desk.*) I must be going now, mister. It's getting late. Mamma will be worrying about me.

MANAGER: One minute, my child, you cannot go out such a distance in this cold. I'll have my chauffeur take you home in my car.

MARIE: In your car! Honest! Am I going to get a ride in a real automobile?

MANAGER (*pointing at her and smiling happily*): Yes, you are, if you wait just a minute. (*Telephones.*) Madison 4257. Hello! John? Come right over. (*Turning to Marie*) He'll be here in a minute. (*Seats himself.*)

MARIE: All right, sir. I'll wait that long. (*Going up to manager.*) Aren't you going home, too, mister? It's getting awfully late and you know if you don't go home, the Christchild will not come to you.

MANAGER (*sadly*): I—Home—what home? Where? I had a home once, but now—

MARIE: No home, mister? Gee, I feel sorry for you. Where do you go to sleep at night when you're tired?

MANAGER: You feel sorry for me. (*Hides face in his hands.*)

MARIE: Yes, I do, mister. Don't feel bad; don't, or else I'll have to cry, too. (*Puts arms around his shoulders.*) I didn't hurt your feelings, did I? Don't you know the Christchild is coming tonight! Gee, I'm so glad. I hope he will bring something nice to you, too, and make you feel happy. (*Naively.*) But you must go to bed early. (*Manager looks up and smiles at Marie.*)

MARIE (*smiling*): Mama said, "His gown is so bright that no one can look at it, only His angels. That's why He comes when everyone is sleeping."

MANAGER: Yes, we are all too full of sin to see. (*Auto horn heard off exterior door.*)

MARIE: Oh, here's the car!

MANAGER: (*Takes purse from pocket and hands Marie a \$20 bill.*) Here's a present for you, Marie. (*Takes old office coat and puts around her.*) And here, put on this coat, it will keep you warm.

MARIE (*taking manager's hand happily*): Is all this for me, mister?

MANAGER: Yes, it is all yours, my child. You can do with it what you like.

MARIE: Oh, I'll give it to papa. He'll be so happy. Thank you, mister, thousand times. (*Enter chauffeur, exterior door.*)

CHAUFFEUR: Your car, sir:

MANAGER (*Takes her by the arm to door*): And I send a Merry Christmas to your papa and mamma.

MARIE: Thank you, mister. (*Waves hand.*) Merry Christmas.

MANAGER (*to chauffeur*): Take her to the Broadway Flats, John, and come back here!

CHAUFFEUR: All right, sir. (*Exit chauffeur with Marie, door to outside. Auto horn heard.*)

MANAGER (*Turns after staring at door through which Marie left. Pleasantly*): Dick Reinhardt, my old pal. Right here in New York—and this little angel his child. I wonder what's come over me tonight. Why, all the money in all the world couldn't please me as much as the look of her innocent eyes. (*Goes to desk, stands and ponders.*) Wonder what Dick would say if he saw me now. He certainly must have changed, too. Christmas always was his favorite time. How he used to set out our plates under the Christmas tree. And how early we went to bed to make the time seem shorter till we could see our toys. Poor Mother! I can still see her working to make it nice for us. I wonder how she feels tonight? And Dad,—he meant it only for my good. I'm going home again. I've got to see them. I've been wrong! Poor Dick. It was all my fault. His little girl out selling papers. It must not be. No! I must see Dick tonight. (*Pause. Noise heard off shipping room.*) (*Manager surprised.*) Jim! Still working? (*Opens shipping room door.*) Jim!

(*Enter Jim from shipping room.*)

JIM: Yes, sir.

MANAGER (*Happily, with entire change of manner*): Guess you ought to be home, Jim. This is no time for work.

JIM: Why, I'm getting out that order.

MANAGER: Well, let it go for tonight. I'm going to give you a little vacation.

JIM (*Looks startled, thinking he is being laid off*): Vacation!

MANAGER: Yes. I must make a trip next week, so you had better go home now for a few days, and when I come back I'll let you handle some of my work, see!

JIM: Why, why, I don't understand what you mean!

MANAGER: I mean a better job for you with more money, Jim. Do you get me?

JIM: Well, if that's what you mean, Mr. Wagner, I'll sure do my best to make good. But I don't understand—

MANAGER (*extending hand*): Put it there, Jim. That's all that's necessary. Take it as a Christmas present from me and a Merry Christmas to you and the wife.

JIM: I wish you the same, Mr. Wagner, but really I don't need a vacation.

MANAGER: That's all right, Jim. Just be back on deck next Monday morning and I'll go over the business with you before I leave.

JIM: All right, sir. I'll be here Monday morning. (*Looks at some order books in office.*)

MANAGER: You had better go right home now, Jim. It's getting quite late.

JIM: Yes, I guess my wife's wondering what's keeping me. Well, good night, Mr. Wagner, and Merry Christmas.

MANAGER: Same to you, Jim. (*Exit Jim, shipping room. Pause.*) Jim's a good boy, after all, by Jove. I'll have him raise the salaries of the whole force. (*Pause.*) Poor Tom. I fired him to cut expenses. He's a willing boy too. Too bad. (*Stands thinking a moment, then looks up Tom's number and goes to telephone.*) Riverside 263, please. Hello! Who is this? This is the Carroll Soap Company. Merry Christmas? Thanks. Same to you. Is Tom there?—Yes, I'd like to talk to him. Hello, Tom. This is Mr. Wagner. Come back to work Monday if you want to, Tom. I've got a better job for you. That's all right. You can start right in Monday. Thanks. Same to you, Tom. Goodbye.

(*Hangs up receiver, rises and stands thinking perplexedly of what he has done and then suddenly smiles brightly.*) By Jove, it is worth while! (*Enter janitor from shipping room, dressed ready to leave. Carries dinner pail. Do not speak the following till laughter has stopped.*)

JOE: Wall, sah, it suah am gettin' late and colder 'n codfish. I jes banked de fiah fo' to-nite and ah all think yo bettah be gowin, sah, 'cause it's gowin to be awfully heah in a few minutes.

MANAGER: All right, Joe, I'll be going soon. You can tell your family, I'm going to raise your salary after the first of the year.

JOE: Wha—What's that yo all say, Mr. Wagner? Ah'm not good a' hearin', yo know.

MANAGER: I'm going to give you a Christmas present and raise your wages.

JOE (*very happy*): Waal, fo de lub o' Christmas! Dis am de

happiest moment o' mah life, sah. Yo know, Mr. Wagner, dis am de fust time ah eba heah dem pleasant words.

MANAGER: Well, I'm glad you're hearing them, Joe.

JOE: Is thaah anything yo all wants me to do afoah ah go, sah?

MANAGER: Nothing at all. Good night.

JOE (*leaving*): Good nite, Mr. Wagner. Merry Christmas! (*Goes a few steps, turns and repeats*): Merry Christmas! (*Then off suddenly.*)

MANAGER: Same to you, Joe. (*Exit Joe, exterior door.*) (*Manager stands looking at door through which Joe left—then turns, and looks around. Music, "Traeumereit."*) Gosh, this place is getting lonesome; everybody's gone home. (*Goes to window.*) I wonder what's keeping my car. The city seems a mass of light tonight. There's a light in every window. The people must be singing Christmas songs. (*Turns slightly.*) That's a long way for that little girl to go. Such a long way, yet everybody goes that cares. Yes, Christmas is the time to be at home. (*Goes to his desk and locks it. Puts on overcoat and hat. Turns out light on switch, if convenient.*) (*In dark repeats*): "Home, Home."

CURTAIN.

ACT TWO.

Scene: Richard Reinhardt's home in New York.
Time: That night.

(Richard Reinhardt discovered eating supper at table in center.)

HELEN (*his wife*) (*Bringing coffee from stove*): I wonder what can be keeping our Marie tonight. It is certainly a disgrace that she has to sell papers. She is altogether too young.

DICK (*angrily*): Well, I can't sell papers, and you can't, either, with that cough of yours. I'm just about through waiting for a change, I never saw times so hard. No work, no money, no hope. A poor man hasn't got a chance in New York. I would work my way out if I could, but I can't. There's no use. The strikers have lost. The trust has bought the law. There's no use.

HELEN (*putting arms around Dick's shoulders*): Cheer up, dear. This is Christmas, you know. Let us forget our worries just for tonight. Don't you remember how often you told me of the way your folks celebrate Christmas. Why shouldn't we be happy? Think of the many poor people who haven't even a bed in which to sleep. (*Coughs.*)

DICK: Well, whose fault is it? The trusts! I'm getting sick of being kicked around like a dog or being treated like a machine. I know my trade as good as anybody. But what good does it do me now. There are too many new machines to take the men's places—so you see there's no use.

HELEN: Don't talk like that, Dick. I remember my mother used to say "Where need is greatest, God's hand is nearest."

DICK: God! Where is God? There is no God!

HELEN: Oh, Dick. Do not give up. These trials are only for the best. I believe there is a God, a God of love, who does things only for our good. (*Pause.*) Today our neighbor lady gave me some of her bread. Goodness knows she hasn't much more than we have. She brought a little Christmas tree too, for Marie. I left it out in the hall. How she does love that child.

DICK (*after pondering, angrily*): We'll never go begging. I'll find some way to get money, if I have to take a chance at stealing it.

HELEN (*excitedly*): Oh, Dick! You would never do that! They would surely get you, and what then? "No matter how fine a web is spun, it always comes to the light of the sun." (*Pleading.*) Be an honest man, Dick.

DICK: Honest, show me a man who is honest. They are all out for the money. Money, honest or dishonest money. I have worked all my life, worked hard, worked honestly; but, it doesn't pay, it doesn't pay! The factories don't appreciate it.

HELEN: I don't see why you can't get something else to do.

DICK: There you go again. You know I'm doing my best. (*Brutally*) If you don't think I am, perhaps you'd better leave me and find some one else, if you can with your everlasting coughing.

HELEN (*weeps*): Oh Dick.

DICK (*Rises, walks about, pause—*): Where is Marie? Why isn't she here?

HELEN: I suppose she is trying to sell all her papers. Here it is nine o'clock and she is still out. (*Coughs.*)

DICK (*In despair*): Well, it can't be helped. She has to keep right on working now. That's the only way we can live. We've got to get money some way.

HELEN: My child in the streets! No, never! Dick, I would rather die of starvation than be the cause of her ruin.

DICK (*Rushing to cupboard*): Well, if there's no other way out of it (*takes revolver from cupboard*) this will end it.

HELEN (*holding his arm and wresting revolver from him*): My God, Richard, not that! (*Pleading.*) For the love of your child, Dick, don't do anything like that. Think of your poor old father. What would become of us? O Dick! If your mother were living you would break her heart. (*Enter Marie, exterior door. Very excited.*)

MARIE: Papa! Mama! Look what I got. (*Runs to her father. Dick turns ashamed.*) Look what I got for you, papa.

DICK: What! Money! Where did you get it? Twenty dollars! (*Examines.*) It's really true? (*Somewhat suspiciously*) Tell me. Where did you get it, my child?

HELEN (*looks at money*): Twenty dollars!

MARIE (*cuddling close to her father*): I got it in a factory, where I went to sell my last paper. At first the man was so cross, he said I should get out where I belong; but I told him I was cold and wanted to warm myself.

HELEN: Did he really want to put you out?

MARIE: Yes, but when I told him I was cold he said that I should come in and warm myself.

DICK: But where did you get this money?

MARIE: I got it from that same man. He said it was a wonder I didn't have some decent clothes to put on in this kind of weather; but I told him the Christchild was coming tonight and maybe He would bring me some. He was so surprised when I told him about the Christchild.

HELEN: Did he give you that coat too?

MARIE: Yes, he put it around me and he was so nice to me. (*Takes off coat and gives to mother.*)

DICK: I wonder who it can be? (*Puts money in pocket.*)

MARIE: He called up a man to come and take me home in his automobile, and when it came he put that money in my hand and said it was a Christmas present for me and he said I should wish you and mama a Merry Christmas for him.

DICK: I wonder who it is— You must be hungry, Marie. Mother, will give you something to eat.

MARIE: Yes, papa, I'm very hungry.

HELEN (*Puts on apron and fixes a place at table*): Here you are. Now sit down, darling, and eat. You must be tired, too.

MARIE: I feel so sleepy; my feet hurt so much.

HELEN: Poor child! I feel sorry for you. I'm sure the Christ-child will come because you've been a good little girl.

DICK: I'll put some more wood on the fire. (*Exit Dick, exterior door.*)

HELEN: Did that man in the factory say anything else to you, Marie?

MARIE: He asked me where papa lived before he came to New York.

HELEN: He did!

MARIE: Yes, and I told him in Helena.

HELEN: Did he ask your name? (*Coughs.*)

MARIE: Yes, he did. Why do you cough so much, mama? You must be awfully sick tonight. I hope the Christchild will make you feel good again, mama. (*Enter Dick with wood and puts in stove, leaves what is over beside stove on floor.*) It's pretty cold, isn't it, papa? (*Teeth chatter.*) Mama, please give me some more soup.

DICK: It's chilly all right, but I hope it will be warmer tomorrow. (*Sits beside stove and reads paper.*)

HELEN (*brings soup and cuts bread*): Here, dear, eat some bread, too.

MARIE: Thank you, mama. Gee, this soup is good!

HELEN: You may have all you want. (*To Dick*) Dick, the man who gave Marie that money asked where you lived formerly. I wonder— (*Suddenly*) Dick! Do you think it might be your friend Edward? (*Puts things away from table into cupboard.*)

DICK: No, I don't think so. (*To Marie*) What was the man's name who gave you this money, Marie?

MARIE: I don't know, papa. He didn't tell me and I forgot to ask him. The name of the factory is the Carroll Soap Company.

DICK. Oh, it isn't Ed. If it were, he would have discovered some way to find me— But whoever it is will never know how much he did for me tonight.

MARIE (*runs to mother*): Oh, mama! I saw thousands of toys in the windows tonight. Dolls and go-carts and sleds and everything. Oh, it was so nice. I hope the Christchild brings me a doll. Wouldn't that be nice, mama?

HELEN: You certainly deserve it, Marie. You've been a good little girl.

MARIE: I'll go to bed right now. But mama, maybe He isn't coming now, 'cause I got a present already. Oh, if He only comes!

HELEN: He will surely come my dear, as He always does whenever we deserve his help.

MARIE (*Runs to Dick, climbs on his knee, looking into his eyes*): Papa, is the Christchild really coming tonight?

DICK (*with entire change of manner, embracing her*): Yes, my darling, He is really coming tonight. What would you like Him to bring for you?

MARIE: I would like to have a little doll.

DICK: Is that all you want?

MARIE (*goes from Dick's knee*): Yes, papa, isn't that a lot?

DICK (*sadly*): The Christchild knows what you say, my dear. He knows everything and I hope He never will forget you.

MARIE (*running to window*): I wish I could see Him, papa, and take a peep into the big room where He keeps all His toys. (*Points to window.*) Oh, look, all the nice flowers on the window. Isn't that fine? Look, mama!

HELEN: That's the work of Jack Frost. He's quite an artist. (*Cleans off table and moves it to right wall, near entrance. Puts back old lamp on same. Dick helps her.*) (*Helen seats herself left center.*)

MARIE (*scraping frost with fingers*): I can't see through the window at all. Does Jack Frost know the little Christchild, papa?

DICK: Oh, yes, the Christchild lets him come to the earth in winter, and he's so happy that he paints all these nice flowers on the windows. He's a pretty sly old boy. When you go out into the cold— (*pinches her nose and ears*) he always tries to pinch your nose or bite your ears. That's because he wants to play with you.

MARIE (*impatient with Dick's rough play*): Oh, papa, don't!

DICK (*going closer to stove*): Well, this feels a little better.

MARIE (*stretching*): I'm so tired, mama. I want to say my prayers.

HELEN: All right, come here, my dear.

MARIE (*kneeling at mother's knee*): Dear God in heaven! Bless papa, bless mama—and that good man—and the whole world. (*Rises and kisses parents.*) Good night! (*Exit, bedroom.*)

HELEN: Good night, dear.

DICK: Good night.

MARIE (*entering from bedroom*): Mama, be sure to set up the Christmas tree tonight.

HELEN: I'll set it up and trim it with candles so the Christchild will know we expect Him when He comes this way.

MARIE (*gets plate from cupboard and sets on table at rear*): Here is my plate, mama. (*Exit Marie, bedroom.*)

HELEN: All right, my girlie. (*Takes off apron and hangs it up.*)

DICK (*looks yearningly after Marie*): God bless the little one. This money is a heaven-sent gift. Let's be happy, Helen! Now we can celebrate a little.

HELEN: You see, Dick, it all came from the Christchild.

DICK (*tenderly, embracing*): Forgive me, Helen. Forgive me for what I have said and done.

HELEN: Yes, dear, I will.

DICK: Now, I will never give up hope again. I'm going to make a new start, and I'll sell all the papers that are going to be sold by this family. You can send Marie to school and teach her something useful.

HELEN: Yes, Dick, and I will try to make you happy.

(*Raps heard off exterior entrance.*)

HELEN: That must be the neighbor.

DICK: Come in!

(*Enter Mrs. Murphy, exterior door.*)

MRS. MURPHY: Mirry Christmas be with ye tonight. Ye looks like yez bin enjoyin' yersilves.

HELEN: Thank you, Mrs. Murphy. You're a mighty good judge.

DICK: Have a chair, Mrs. Murphy. (*Offers her chair.*) We're going to celebrate tonight.

MRS. MURPHY: Sure, and ye should, havin' such a swate child to bliss yer home.

HELEN: Just think, she came home tonight and brought us twenty dollars. She got it from some kind-hearted soul in town.

MRS. MURPHY: Twinty dollars! Lor' o' Mercy, I don't think me old eyes could stand the sight of so much. Sure, ye'll be wearin' silks and sattins an' not lookin' at the likes o' us.

DICK: There's no danger, Mrs. Murphy, we owe much to you, and we want you and your husband to come and share it with us.

MRS. MURPHY: God bless yez all fer it. I knew yer heart would be in the right place. Where's the child?

HELEN: She's already in bed.

MRS. MURPHY: Sure the little angel's faith in the Christchild would soft'n the heart o' the hardest. Well, I must be goin', or me cookin' will spoil.

HELEN: O dear, are you still at it, this hour of the night?

MRS. MURPHY: Sure, the likes of us niver finishes workin'.

DICK: Be sure and come over tomorrow, Mrs. Murphy.

MRS. MURPHY: Ye'll see us, Mr. Reinhardt. I jest bin wantin' to see the child, to give her this hair ribbon for a Christmas present. I found it today. (*Hands small package to Helen.*) Ye give it to her fer me.

DICK: Thank you, Mrs. Murphy.

HELEN: She'll be a happy girl to get that.

MRS. MURPHY: Faith, and she be deservin' of it. Well, I must be goin'. Mirry Christmas to ye all.

DICK and HELEN: Merry Christmas. (*Exit Mrs. Murphy, exterior door.*)

HELEN: Isn't she a dear soul? We must give them something tomorrow. (*Puts package on table at rear.*)

DICK: You are right, Helen, you always know what's best. Let's fix the table and celebrate tonight. I'll get the little Christmas tree.

HELEN: Yes, we must give the Christchild a welcome. (*Humming "Silent Night," goes to cupboard and gets clean table cloth. Meanwhile Dick goes to hall and returns after a half minute with tree on stand and puts on small table in rear.*)

DICK: Here you are! Doesn't this look fine? It makes me think of home.

HELEN: Let me put on this clean table cloth first. (*Takes off scarf and puts clean white cloth and box of trimmings on small table in rear.*)

DICK: I'll bet the folks are enjoying themselves tonight. I should have written them. By George, I'll do it right now. (*Gets tablet and pencil in cupboard and sits at kitchen table and writes.*)

HELEN (*trimming tree at small table*): It's too bad Grandma Wagner never hears from her son Edward. I wonder whatever became of him. How long is it now since you and he left home?

DICK (*lights pipe*): Oh, it's a long time ago; about twelve years, I guess. We were in a wreck of a west bound freight in the Rockies and the end half of the cars was thrown off the track while the engine was going at full speed. Luckily, I was in the second car and went ahead with the engine, but I think Edward was in one of the back cars

and must have lost his life when they ran off the track and fell down the embankment into a lake.

HELEN: Into a lake?

DICK: Yes, I told you about that, don't you remember? The rest of us came to a stop about a mile from the place and went back, but no one was found.

HELEN: Goodness! How terrible!

DICK: Yes, I haven't seen Ed since that time. (*Continues writing.*)

HELEN: I suppose he was killed then. My, I feel sorry for his poor old mother. She still thinks he is coming back some day.

DICK: My sister Kate used to be in love with him, poor girl. She's still waiting for him, too.

HELEN: It's queer the folks haven't written us yet.

DICK: Oh, I think we'll soon hear from them. They always write for Christmas.

HELEN (*gets a candle on holder from cupboard and lights it*): I'm going to let this candle burn all night and set it in the window, to light the Christchild on His way. (*Sets candle on table at window.*)

DICK: Just as mother used to do at home. It's a great old custom. (*Noise of approaching footsteps heard off exterior entrance.*)

HELEN (*starting, frightened*): Someone is coming up the stairs. (*Raps heard off exterior entrance.*)

DICK: I wonder who it can be, at this hour. (*Rises and goes to door.*) Who's there?

EDWARD: Does Dick Reinhardt live here?

DICK: Yes, who is it?

EDWARD (*Outside*): It's your old friend; let me in, please. (*Dick slowly opens door. Edward Wagner seen in doorway with many bundles.*) (*Wagner entering, stands a moment, says nothing, then drops bundles on table at right wall near entrance.*)

DICK (*looking at him piercingly a moment*): Edward Wagner?—Edward Wagner! I thought you dead.

EDWARD: Dick, old fellow, I'm very much alive tonight. (*They clasp hands and unclasp them.*)

DICK: It's twelve years since I last saw you. You've changed so much, I hardly knew you.

EDWARD (*putting arms about shoulder*): Shake again, old man, I've just risen from the dead.

DICK (*shaking hands*): Come right here and sit down. (*Shows him to chair near stove.*) But meet my wife. Helen, this is my old friend Edward Wagner, found at last.

HELEN: I'm very happy to meet you, Mr. Wagner. Will you be seated? Let me have your coat. (*Takes same, hangs on hook, right wall near entrance.*) Dick has told me so much about you.

EDWARD (*seating himself*): Thank you very much. It feels mighty good to be where our friends are. God knows I haven't seen a soul from home for twelve years.

DICK: We were just talking about you, Ed. My, but you have changed, old pal! How in the world did you ever find this place? I never dreamed of seeing you tonight. How did you ever get out of

that wreck of the freight cars? You were near the end of the train when we got on.

EDWARD: My story is quickly told, Dick. I wasn't in that wreck in the mountain. I had a fight with one of the brakemen at a station this side of where the accident happened; so I couldn't get on again when she pulled out, but stayed there over night and took one the next day.

DICK: Gee, but you were lucky.

EDWARD: Well, I sure was. After that I looked for you and worked a while in some of those western towns and saved a little money to go to the coast. But things didn't come just right; so I thought I would try the East. And when I came to this city, sure enough, my luck changed and I got a good job with the Carroll Soap Company.

HELEN (*surprised*): The Carroll Soap Company!

EDWARD: Yes. I worked my way up from shipping clerk to manager and five years ago I bought out Mr. Carroll, who wanted to retire.

DICK: Well, that was pushing yourself ahead, old man.

HELEN: Isn't it wonderful. You surely must have worked hard.

EDWARD: Indeed I did; and I'll tell you, it took a few years away from my life. (*Points to his temples.*) There is a reason for this gray hair. Yes, Dick, I have changed. Anyone would change in such a long time. Conditions, too, have changed since I came here.

DICK: I should say they have. (*Pause.*) Isn't it strange, after I lost you I came straight to this city because I thought I would find you here. You always said you wanted to see New York. Why didn't you look me up sooner?

EDWARD: I thought, Dick, you had deserted me and gone back home.

DICK (*seating himself*): Oh, I never would have done that. At first when I came here, everything went along fine. I had a good job in a shoe factory. The experience I got with father helped me get it. Here's where I met Helen, too, and we were married; and life was mighty sweet for awhile. We made a trip home and saw the folks; and say, Ed, they certainly were glad to see us. You should have seen how mother hugged the both of us. But there was a disappointment too— (*Edward shows excitement*). I don't like to tell you, old pal, but you'll get to know it anyhow, sooner or later;—your father had died since—

EDWARD (*rises, interrupting*): Dead! Don't tell me that, Dick.

DICK: They told me, his last words were a blessing to you. He forgave you everything.

EDWARD: Dear old father. My God forgive me! Dick, how is mother?

DICK: She's still living but she's getting pretty old. She's living with your brother John now and waiting for you to come back.

EDWARD: Poor mother—still waiting for me. (*Covers face with hands—pause—then suddenly*): Dick! we're going home

DICK: Home!

EDWARD: It was all my fault that you ever left home, old pal; I want to make good. That is why I came to see you tonight. And oh, I must see dear old mother.

DICK: My mother is dead. She died three years ago. But let's cheer up, old man, it's Christmas Eve. Thank God we're together again and lucky enough to be alive. Since I was out of work my wife has been continually ailing and we lost all we had ever saved. That's the way it goes. My little girl has been selling papers for the last three days.

EDWARD: Where is she, Dick? She was in my office this evening and—

HELEN: So it was you who gave her that money? Oh, thank you, Mr. Wagner.

DICK: Then your concern is the Carroll Soap Company.

EDWARD (*laughing*): That's me.

DICK: What can I ever do to repay you, Ed, old man? You might not know it, but you've saved this home from ruin.

HELEN (*holds up restraining hand, not wishing Edward to know*): So that's how you happened to look us up tonight.

EDWARD: I did only my duty. I've been wrong, I know, but I'm a changed man now. When your little girl came to my office and told me the Christchild was coming tonight, I was myself again. I saw the Christmas tree at my old home; I saw mother with her same sweet smile and all those happy childhood days came back to me. Something in me changed, and I decided to go home again. What fools pride makes of us! I've lost many things through my stubbornness, Dick. I was a wayward, young fool. I've lost father, home and the only woman I ever loved—your sister Catherine. Though she refused me and in anger I have never written to her since we left home—tonight I feel she did it for my sake. I'm going home! And I came, Dick, to take you and your family along. I am sure you would like to go. It will cost you nothing. I'm happy to be able to do it.

DICK: But this is too much.

EDWARD: Dick, I owe it to you. You would not have left home if I hadn't coaxed you into it. Now I'm ready to make good. I want to see them all again; and most of all, my dear old mother. But tell me, Dick, how is Kate, your sister? I hope she hasn't forgotten me. My sister Margaret and she used to be great chums.

DICK: Margaret is married now; she lives in Chicago.

EDWARD: You don't say! I am very anxious to see her. Do you know, Dick, I'm getting tired of this lonesome life.

DICK (*mischievously*): Well, I think Kate still loves you. You might have a rival for all I know, old pal, but she often writes about you, and has even asked me to find out where you are.

EDWARD: She has? Well, I'll have to let her know. You're all to come with me; and Dick, you'll not be out of a job any longer.

HELEN: How can we ever repay you, Mr. Wagner?

EDWARD: You have nothing to repay. (*Goes to table, unwraps bundles.*)

HELEN: The Christchild remembered us all right, Dick. (*Takes his arm.*)

EDWARD: Here are some of the things He sent along for you. (*Shows bundles and big doll. Passes candy also.*)

DICK (*Takes a sucker and licks it*): Well, this beats all. I just feel as if I were a boy again.

HELEN (*taking doll*): Isn't this sweet?

EDWARD: That's for little Marie. Where is she?

HELEN: She's sleeping. Shall I wake her?

EDWARD: Oh, no. She can see it in the morning. The poor child must be tired. She told me in the office that she had been walking the streets all day. We had better let her sleep. (*Noticing Christmas tree.*) What a great little tree! (*Puts doll under same.*)

DICK: We were lucky enough to get that from our neighbor.

HELEN: Look, Dick! Here is a new dress for Marie. I don't know how to thank you, Mr. Wagner.

EDWARD (*coming forward*): Don't thank me, thank the Great Giver.

DICK (*brokenly*): I really don't know what to say to all this.

EDWARD: Don't Dick. Let us plan when we're going to leave for home. I am ready any time. How about you?

DICK: My time is yours, old pal.

EDWARD: All right. We leave Tuesday; that brings us home for the New Year. We'll send the folks a telegram tonight and let them know we all are coming. Say, I'll bet they'll be surprised. I wonder what mother will say. (*Pause.*) God bless little Marie. She's an angel. I never saw a sweeter and more innocent looking child in my life.

HELEN: Before she went to bed tonight, she came and knelt at my knee and said: "God bless papa, and mamma and that good man." She meant you, Mr. Wagner.

EDWARD. God bless her. That's really the dearest thing any one ever said about me in this town.

DICK: Let's light the candles. (*Lights them very spirited.*) Do you remember, Ed, how we used to string popcorn and gild walnuts and make chains out of colored paper and hang them on the Christmas tree?

EDWARD: You bet I do, old man. Those were the happy days. Yes, and how we used to set our plates under the tree?

DICK: And how we used to sing the old Christmas songs?

EDWARD: Wasn't it great! Those days will never be forgotten. And how your father played his violin— Do you remember, Dick, all the things mother used to make for Christmas? There were the pies, and the cakes, and the cookies, and fried cakes. And what an appetite we had? It makes me hungry when I think of it.

DICK: Say, weren't those good times! Gee, but it'll be great to be home again.

EDWARD: I can hardly wait. We must send them a telegram tonight.

DICK: Send it to my father as if it were coming from me. He is always at John's house on Christmas eve. It might be too much of a surprise for your mother, Ed.

EDWARD: That's right. (*Looks at watch.*) Our time is two hours ahead of theirs; so you see, they will get it tonight. We'll tell them we will be home in a week. We can't make it any sooner because I must arrange things at the office before I go. Does that suit you, Dick?

DICK: Just fine! Say, I'll bet it will be the greatest surprise of

their lives. (*Bells are heard without. All listen; then shout "Merry Christmas" and go to window.*)

HELEN (*Draws up curtain or opens window. Bells are heard louder.*) (*After looking down*): O what a beautiful sight! All the streets are decked with lights. (*Looks up.*) But look, above the high buildings and spires, the boundless blue valley of heaven is full of twinkling stars. They are shining like legions of angels singing forever "Glory to God on high and peace on earth to men of good will."

DICK: How peaceful the world has become. There is a change in its whole appearance.

HELEN: It is because the Christchild is here, The Prince of Peace, Whose Love has caused this magic change.

DICK: And hear those bells!

EDWARD: The bells of the mid-night mass. Those grand old bells. They have rung every Christmas night for these twelve years, but my heart has been too hard to hear their glorious sound. Come, Dick, let us go to the midnight mass. (*Bells and music come to slow stop.*)

DICK: All right, Ed, we'll go at once.

EDWARD (*puts on overcoat*): Well, good-night, Mrs. Reinhardt. (*Shakes hands.*) I will see you tomorrow.

HELEN: Good night, Mr. Wagner. (*Goes to door with him.*)

EDWARD: It's pretty cold tonight.

DICK: Yes, but I don't mind the cold when I'm with you, old man.

EDWARD: My chauffeur is waiting below. I hope he has kept the car warm.

DICK (*putting on overcoat*): I'll be back soon, Helen. (*Exit Edward and Dick, exterior door.*)

HELEN: All right, Dick. (*Closes door, looks at tree for moment and hums "Adeste Fidelis." Hangs small picture of Christchild on tip. Then goes to table at right wall, takes things Edward brought and puts them beneath tree and blows out the candle lights. Goes back and sits down at table, turns lamp low, drops head on arms, lights out. Music very softly, "Silent Night." Chimes may be imitated striking twelve before vision enters.*) (*Leaves candle burning in window.*)

VISION: (*Angels seen peeping through window. Exterior door is opened by leader angel, who stands guard at same. Six angels enter drawing baby sled on which the Christchild is seated; spot-light from left door on the Christchild. Angels draw sleigh to center and drill around same. The Christchild hands each some toys, candy, etc., which they put on Marie's plate on table near window. All drill around sleigh again, take their places and draw it out same door. Door closed again by leader angel. After vision Helen starts at entrance of Marie, when she says, "Mama! second time.)*) If necessary, vision may be left out. In that case have music cease on entrance of Marie.)

MARIE (*Enters in white night gown from bedroom door.*) (*Excitedly hopping*): Oh, mamma, mamma! I had such a beautiful dream. I saw the dear little Christchild. He was right here in this room and he brought me a great big doll. Oh, it was so nice.

HELEN (*Rises, looks around half asleep, then goes to Christmas tree hurriedly*): Come here, my child. Your dream has really come

true— (*suddenly*) and this is your doll. Isn't it a beauty! (*Lights candles on tree.*)

MARIE (*runs to table, takes doll*): Oh, mama! Isn't she pretty! Look, she opens and closes her eyes. Whenever I lay her down, she goes to sleep. Isn't that fine, mama? (*Puts doll back in place.*)

HELEN: And here's a new dress for you, my dear, that will keep you warm.

MARIE (*takes it and examines*): A new dress! Gee, I got lots of things. Oh, I'm so glad. (*Hops about, puts dress down, takes doll again, looks at tree.*) Look, all the candles on the Christmas tree. They light like the little stars, don't they, mama? And there is a picture of the Christchild right on the tip. (*Looking up, doll in arms.*) I love you, dear little Christchild.

QUICK CURTAIN.

A VISION OF THE CHRISTCHILD

This title may be used in giving the vision separately as a short playlet. Follow all directions after the word VISION and add the following at the end of the dialogue:

MARIE (*Bells heard without*): Oh, mama, listen! (*Goes to window.*) The bells are ringing!

HELEN: The bells of the midnight mass. Those grand old bells. Through all the Christian world is heard their glorious sound. Calling, calling us all to come to the Saviour.

MARIE: All the streets are filled with lights, mother.

HELEN: But look, dear, above the high building and spires. The boundless blue valley of heaven is full of twinkling stars. They are shining like legions of angels singing forever "Glory to God on high and peace on earth to men of good will."

MARIE: Look, mother! In every window there's a candle burning. Everything is so pretty, isn't it, mother?

HELEN: It is because the Christchild is here, the Prince of Peace, Whose Love has caused this magic change. Now, you must say your little prayer, too.

MARIE (*Kneels at mother's knee*): Dear God in heaven! Bless papa, bless mama and me and the whole world.

CURTAIN.

The above will be more attractive if the song on page 32, "Christmas Evening Now is Here," is sung by a number of children in front of curtain before it rises.

Each act may be given separately as a playlet.

ACT THREE

Scene: Living room in home of John Wagner, mayor of Helena, Mont.
Time: New Year's Eve.

(*Discovering Grandpa Reinhardt playing the violin, Gertrude Wagner at the piano. John Wagner and Catherine Reinhardt sing "Silent Night," or if better suited, have John and Gertrude sing and Catherine play. Children about Christmas tree. Grandma seated at fireplace tries to hide her tears. No lights, except on Christmas tree. Glow of fireplace on Grandma.*)

(*When music ceases Kate goes to Grandma sympathetically and gently puts arm around her shoulder. Grandpa sits in his chair by fireplace after leaving his violin on the piano.*)

GERTRUDE (*rises*): Come children, it is getting late. You must be going to bed.

GEORGE: Please, mother! Let us stay up until the New Year.

ALL CHILDREN: Please, mother!

GRANDPA: Let them stay up a little longer. (*Gertrude smiles and nods consent.*)

GEORGE (*Going to Grandpa. Others crowd around*): Grandpa did you see my toys? I got a sled and some skates and a rocking horse.

ALFRED: And I got a steam engine and an aeroplane, Grandpa.

ROSE: And I got a big doll that can close her eyes, and a bed, and I'd like to have a go-cart to wheel her around.

ALFRED and GEORGE (*speaking together*): Alfred—I'm going to make my aeroplane fly over the house. George—Wait till you see me race the kids around here!

ROSE: And we got lots of candy too—

ALFRED: And walnuts and ice cream—

ROSE: And cake and cookies—

GEORGE: And a Christmas goose;—and I had a stomachache—

GRANDPA (*holding up hands*): Not so fast! Not so fast! I don't think the little Christchild had much left when he got away from this house!

ROSE: Oh, yes, Grandpa, He had lots and lots.

GEORGE: And papa told us stories about Christmas.

ALFRED: Grandpa, you tell us a story, will you please?

ROSE: Oh, yes, Grandpa, please tell us a story.

GEORGE: Please, Grandpa.

GRANDPA: Well, all right, children. I'll tell you the story of the first Christmas tree. (*Very soft music or none at all.*) Long, long ago, in the village of Bethlehem, when the little Christchild lay in the manger, not only the angels rejoiced and the shepherds, but also the oxen and the sheep in the stable and all the trees in the forest. There were three which stood near the crib, the palm, the olive and the pine. They saw how each of the three kings gave the Christchild some presents, so they wanted to give something too. The palm tree said: "I will choose my most beautiful leaf and place a fan over the head of the infant." "And I," said the olive, "will sprinkle my oil upon Him and annoint Him King." "But what can I give the Child?" asked the humble pine. "You," scoffed the others, "have nothing to offer. Your sap is too sticky and your needles would hurt him." The poor little

pine tree became very sad. "You are right," it said, "I have nothing to give Him." But near it stood an angel who heard what had been said and felt sorry for the poor pine tree, so he took his golden necklace and hung it about the tree and made it look so bright and beautiful, that the others became envious. And when the little Christchild awoke, He smiled to see that the pine tree was so nicely trimmed for Him. Now, every year, we trim the pine tree for the Christchild. So when He comes, He is glad, because seeing it, He knows we welcome Him. (*Short pause.*) And now, children, I must hear you sing one of your Christmas songs again.

The following may be told if preferable:

Long, long ago there lived a good and kindly man, his name was Boniface. He had such a tender heart that he could not bear to see people suffer and have their children put to death because they believed God wanted it.

So as he was journeying through the country one Christmas evening, he came to a place where the little boy of a queen was just about to be put to death as a sacrifice to a huge oak tree which they thought was God.

Now, just as the bad man was lifting a big hammer to kill the little boy, St. Boniface jumped up and held the hammer and demanded him to stop; that God did not want him to kill any little boy, but that the Christchild who was the true God wanted everybody to live and be happy, and to show that this was right he said: "Your God whom you thought was in the oak tree is withered and dead, but this evergreen I hold up to you lives in winter as well as summer and stands for the true God. Who offered Himself to save the world. And to show that this was right he held up an evergreen tree which God made to live and be green all through the winter as well as the summer.

The bad man got frightened and had to go away and the queen was so happy that her little boy was saved that she took the evergreen tree and set it up in her home and trimmed it with all kinds of pretty ornaments to thank God for having saved her boy. Now, every year we trim an evergreen tree to thank the Christchild for all he has done for us, and now, children, I must hear you sing one of your Christmas songs again.

JOHN: Yes, Gertrude, you play for them. (*Gertrude sits at piano and plays softly "Christmas Evening Now Is Here." Children take places about tree.*) All right, now sing your song, children.

ROSE: What shall we sing?

GRANDPA: Let them sing "Christmas Evening Now Is Here."

ALFRED: Yes, we all know that. (*Starts to dance and sings. Rose and George follow immediately.*) (*Music.*)

MERRILY

Let us glad and hap-py be Dancing round our Christmas Tree, Mer-ry merry

let us cheer-Christmas Eve-ning now is here! Christmas Eve-ning now is here.

Let us glad and happy be,
Dancing 'round the Christmas tree.
Merrily, merrily let us cheer,
Christmas evening now is here!
Christmas evening now is here!

Set your plates beneath the tree,
Let the Christchild welcome be.
Merrily, merrily let us cheer,
Christmas evening now is here!
Christmas evening now is here!

(All applaud and children stand arm in arm. Do not make it appear as if they were addressing audience.)

Merry Christmas to you all,
Everyone both big and small,
Mother don't forget to call,
Merry Christmas to you all,
Merry Christmas to you all.
(All applaud. Wind heard without.)

GERTRUDE: My, it is still storming!

GRANDPA: Are Margaret and her husband coming tomorrow?

JOHN: No, not until later. The terrible storms during the last week have kept her from coming. Until yesterday, all the trains were delayed. Across the mountains the wires have been down for a week.

KATE: Think of the many poor people who must suffer in these dreadful storms. I wish I could take all their cares away.

JOHN: Yes, Kate, to help the poor is the rich man's first duty.

GRANDPA: I wonder why we haven't heard from Dick. He usually writes a nice long letter for Christmas.

KATE: I wonder if they have received our presents.

GRANDPA: It looks as if there were something wrong.

GRANDMA: You told me the last time he wrote, Helen was sick and he was out of work. I wonder how little Marie is getting along.

KATE: We have never seen her. I hope they all will come some day.

GRANDPA: It seems strange. He was getting along fine for a while after he visited us with his wife.

KATE: Father became alarmed and sent a telegram the day after Christmas, but could not get it over the wires.

JOHN: Didn't they get it off yet?

GRANDPA: They got connections this afternoon.

GERTRUDE: It certainly did storm Christmas Eve.

JOHN: It is hard on the children. They have been indoors most of the week.

KATE *(looking out of window)*: The snow is getting deeper and I think the wind is dying down somewhat. It looks so nice outside.

GRANDPA: Yes, when you are inside.

KATE: You can see the light in the houses gleam through it all. It's a beautiful night.

GRANDPA: Regular New Year's weather.

JOHN: I suppose we'll hear of some more avalanches sweeping down the mountains, and of some more wrecks on the railroads.

GRANDPA: That is what happened to Dick and Edward. It's

nearly twelve years ago. (*Grandma half rises. Kate turns and looks out of the window.*) Forgive me, mother, for mentioning it.

JOHN: Just think, we have been neighbors all these years. (*Goes over to Grandma, who tries to hide her tears.*) There, mother, do not take it so hard.

GRANDMA: It has been my one thought for years. I feel so lonely tonight. If Edward were only here I might be happy. I think we did not understand Edward then. How I have prayed for that boy to come back—but I know God does what is best for us.

GRANDPA: Yes, mother, we must all have our troubles, it seems. (*Looks at her sympathetically.*) But if Edward is still alive he will be back some day; and when he comes, I'll bet he will have made a man of himself and we will love him all the more for it.

GRANDMA (*rises*): I have hoped for that all these long, long years—but the good Lord will bring him back some day. (*Goes toward dining room.*)

ROSE (*naively going to Grandma*): I know what Grandma can give us.

GRANDMA: What, dear?

ROSE: A piece of cake.

ALFRED and GEORGE (*crowding around Grandma*): Please, Grandma. (*Grandma looks inquiringly at Gertrude, who smiles and nods approval.*)

(*Exit Grandma with children to dining room.*)

ROSE (*In going out*): With raisins, Grandma—

ALFRED (*In going out*): And frosting on top—

GEORGE (*In going out*): I like you, Grandma. (*Voice lost in dining room.*)

GRANDPA (*filling corn-cob pipe*): Ah, the children! How much trouble they make, and yet what would we do without them!

JOHN: Poor Mother. I wish she might forget about Edward. I sometimes think he must have been killed. Dick thinks so. (*Looks sympathetically at Kate, who all this time has been looking out of window.*) And mother is not the only one who has suffered all these years.

KATE (*turns from window, comes down somewhat*): Please don't, John. (*Crosses to piano, plays a few bars of soft music during which Grandpa smokes and gazes into the fire.*)

GRANDPA: Well, let us be happy. This is New Year's Eve. Forget your troubles and begin the New Year with a happy heart.

(*Door bell rings. Music stops. Enter servant from dining room.*)

GERTRUDE: What's that, I wonder.

SERVANT (*to herself*): My, vat ist, so late?

JOHN: We'll soon find out.

(*Servant opens exterior door.*)

TELEGRAPH MESSENGER (*Seen in doorway covered with snow. White frozen mark on tip of nose. Takes off cap from which snow falls. In low voice*): Does Mr. John Wagner live here?

SERVANT: Yes, mister, vat ist?

MESSENGER: Here's a telegram for him, delayed on account of wires. Charges paid. (*Gives telegram to servant.*)

SERVANT: Kum inside undt varm yourself a little bit, mister.

(Noting white mark on messenger's nose.) Ooh! your nose ist frozen; quick mit sum shnow on it.

(Exit messenger, exterior door, for a moment and returns holding artificial or natural snow on his nose. Steps in. Closes door.)

SERVANT (hands telegram to John): Telekram, Mister Wagner. Kudn't kum kvicker bekos da vires ist busted. (To herself.) Ach, now I wunder vat hes heppened.

JOHN: A telegram?

GERTRUDE: Who could have sent it?

JOHN (handing servant tip): Here, Mena. Give this to the boy and wish him a Happy New Year.

SERVANT (goes to Messenger. Hands him tip): Mister Wagner ses dis ist for yous, undt Heppy New Year.

MESSENGER (joyously exclaims): Thanks; same to you all. (Exit, exterior door.)

SERVANT (going back to dining room): Dot poor boy. (Exit.)

JOHN (opens telegram and after locking at it): Here, Grandpa, this is for you. (Hands to Grandpa.) (All show excitement.)

GRANDPA: For me? (Looking at it.) Why, it's from New York, from Dick.

KATE: Dick! Is it really! I hope nothing has happened.

GRANDPA (reading it through hurriedly, then aloud, reads): Dear Father and Kate and all the Wagners, Merry Christmas. I have some good news for you. Tonight Edward Wagner came to see us. (Gertrude goes to Kate and puts arm around her shoulder.)

JOHN: Ed, alive!

GRANDPA (reading): "We have all decided to come home. Will leave New York about Tuesday. Expect to be home New Year's Eve. Break the news gently to Edward's mother. Edward sends a Merry Christmas to all, especially to her. Your affectionate son, Dick."

JOHN: Poor mother! This will be the happiest New Year of her life. (Pause.) Grandpa Reinhardt, you have known each other all your lives, will you break the news to her?

GRANDPA (greatly moved): Yes, John; and it will be the most blessed thing I've done in my life. But let me do it in my own way.

GERTRUDE: I wonder how they happened to meet.

KATE: He must certainly be a changed man. (Tears of gladness.)

JOHN: Probably Edward was in New York all the time and didn't know Dick was there.

GRANDPA: Ah ha! ah ha, Kate! Now you had better take care. (All laugh.)

GERTRUDE: It's queer they met just on Christmas Eve, isn't it?

GRANDPA: This telegram was sent at 12:10 a. m. Christmas. They are coming tonight. They ought to be here now. I notice the trains are on time again. Where is Grandma? What is she doing? (Goes to Kate, puts arm around her and talks in low tones to her. Kate smiles at him through her tears.)

KATE: She's with the children.

GERTRUDE: How she loves the little ones. And she's so happy when she can give them something.

JOHN: We must also let Margaret know he is coming. She might be able to come sooner. Dick mentions Edward alone.

GRANDPA (*Lights his pipe.*) (*To Kate, aloud, mischievously looking at others.*) I don't see how a man could be in New York all this time without getting married! (*Wind without.*)

KATE (*reproachfully*): Father!

(*All laugh but stop suddenly when Grandma enters. Kate goes and helps her to her seat near the fire. John and Gertrude look at Grandpa meaningly, then at Grandma. Kate stands near Grandma's chair. Grandpa goes to his chair, puffs at pipe. All show nervous excitement except Grandma and Grandpa. Wind without.*)

GRANDMA: Just hear that wind howl. Isn't it comfortable to sit by this warm fire!

GRANDPA: Yes, Mother Wagner. This is a blessing that we all can enjoy; to sit by a nice warm fire on a cold night and smoke a pipe as sweet as a nut. (*Laughs.*) There is nothing like the good old corn cob after all. When I think of all the trouble it has carried me through, I do not mind the New Years as they come and go.

GRANDMA: Yes, we are growing old. Do you remember the happy days when we were in our teens?

GRANDPA: I remember when you first met Carl. He was a handsome man. I often envied him.

GRANDMA: Often I think of those happy days when we all were together. Carl could tell so many nice stories of the war and of the time he served in the army. I always loved to hear him.

GRANDPA (*reguishly*): Yes, Carl was a great story teller. He told me many a story, I can tell you! How many things have changed since then!

GRANDMA: You and Mary had no easy time of it. I believe that is what took her away from us so soon. I know it was all this trouble that took my Carl.

GRANDPA: Through our greatest sorrows came our greatest joys, mother. You have waited so long for your joy. Could you bear it if it were to come?

GRANDMA: With God's help, as I have borne the sorrows!

GRANDPA: Then this is one of the happiest moments of my life, as it will be of yours. (*Grandma looks startled.*) Mother, while you were with the children, I received a telegram from New York, from Dick. They are all well and are coming home.

GRANDMA: Coming home! Won't that be fine?

GRANDPA: But there was better news—news for you, mother—happy news—and may the good God help you to bear the happiness when I tell you that your son Edward is alive, that he is coming home—that they will all be here—tonight.

(*NOTE: Give the speech slowly, with good pauses, in gentle tone.*) (*Grandma rises, presses hand to heart and smiles. Kate puts arm around her shoulder, pats it.*)

GRANDMA: Let me see that telegram! (*Grandpa shows it to her and she reads it through. Children enter arguing.*)

ROSE: He did too.

GEORGE: He did not.

ALFRED: No, he didn't, sister.

ROSE (*going up to Grandpa*): Grandpa Reinhardt, didn't Uncle Dick write to you for Christmas?

GRANDPA: The finest letter in the world, and it came over the telegraph. We just got it, and he and Marie and her mother are coming home tonight.

ROSE (*going to Grandma*): Are they, Grandma?

GRANDMA (*Clasps Rose tightly to her, smiling through tears*): Yes, dear, and Uncle Edward, whom you have never seen, is coming with them.

ALFRED and GEORGE (*running up to Grandma*): Our Uncle Edward?

GRANDMA: Yes, your Uncle Edward.

(*All together, dancing joyously and clapping hands*): Goody! Goody!

ROSE: Papa, may we light up the Christmas tree?

JOHN: Sure, go ahead. (*Rose turns on electric lights on tree.*)
(*Some other lights out.*)

GRANDPA: Be careful, youngsters, I have put up some mistletoe in this room. You will never find it, but I know where it is.

GEORGE: I know, too, Grandpa.

ROSE: Gee, they'll be surprised. I'm anxious to see little Marie. I'll show her my nice big doll.

ALFRED: Edward is Aunt Kate's big uncle, too, isn't he, Grandpa? (*Kate blushes, Grandpa laughs outright, the grown-ups also laugh.*)

GRANDPA: No, he's your big uncle. You must be very good to him.

GEORGE: I'll kiss him if he gets under the mistletoe; and Uncle Richard, too.

ALFRED: I'll kiss little Marie, too! I wonder what all she got for Christmas. (*Goes to Grandpa's chair.*)

GRANDPA (*jovially*): You may kiss them all.

GRANDMA: You all must sing your Christmas song, too. (*Sits on chair under chandelier near center and looks at toys.*)

GEORGE (*runs up and kisses Grandma. Points at her*): You're under the mistletoe, Grandma, yes you are. (*Grandma laughs, rises and seats herself in chair by fireplace.*)

GRANDPA (*laughing heartily*): I believe you got under on purpose.

GRANDMA (*with mock indignation*): I never did; I didn't know where it was.

GRANDPA: Well, aren't you glad?

GRANDMA (*looks at him gratefully*): Yes, Henry, I am happier tonight than I ever have hoped to be. (*Sleigh bells or auto horn heard without.*)

ROSE (*joyously*): They'er coming! They're coming!

GRANDMA: I think I hear them. (*Children rush to window. Voices and laughter heard without.*)

CHILDREN: Here they are! Here they are! (*Run out of door. John and Gertrude go out with them. Grandpa and Grandma rise. Kate sits at piano. Wind heard without. All enter shouting hello!*)

How are you? etc. Edward meanwhile may be heard saying, "Where is mother?" Leave only luggage at entrance.)

GRANDMA: My dearest hope come true at last.

GRANDPA: What a happy home coming.

KATE: I can hardly believe it even now.

(Enter crowd, living room. First children, Edward, John, Gertrude, Richard, Helen and Marie carrying her doll.)

(The following lines should be delivered with great enthusiasm.)

EDWARD: Mother!

GRANDMA *(holding out her arms)*: Edward! My boy! *(Edward kisses her hungrily and holds her in long embrace.)*

EDWARD: Mother, you've been an angel to me. You don't know how happy I am to be with you again. *(Helps her to chair.)*

GRANDMA *(fondles him)*: My boy! My boy!

EDWARD: O, what would this cold world be without your love! You have never forgotten me. Mother, I wouldn't take all the wealth of the world if you were not here tonight. *(Here speak in undertone to Grandma. Tell about trip until regular lines come in.)*

(NOTICE: Upon entrance Dick, Helen and Marie immediately gather near Grandpa and Kate and say their lines without waiting for Edward to finish. Their voices, however, should not be nearly as loud as the former. John and Gertrude meanwhile are putting away the wraps and the children stand near the Christmas tree and look on.)

RICHARD *(grasping his father's hand)*: Dad! *(Grandpa pats him on the back.)*

GRANDPA: How are you, my boy?

DICK: Gee, I'm glad to see you again! It certainly seems good to be back home.

GRANDPA: I never expected you tonight; never dreamed of such a thing. You surely surprised me with that telegram.

HELEN *(comes up with Marie and kisses Grandpa)*: Well, how is Daddy? You surely look young tonight. I don't think you ever get older, do you?

GRANDPA: No use, Helen, as long as I feel young.

MARIE: Hello, Grandpa!

GRANDPA: Hello, little girl. *(Takes her up and fondles.)* Well how is my little Marie?

MARIE: O, fine. Look at the nice doll I got from the Christchild!

GRANDPA: I think she resembles you, Helen, she surely looks just like the picture you sent us of her.

DICK: Hello, big sister Kate. *(Takes her in his arms and kisses her.)*

KATE: Oh, Dick! *(Kate kisses Helen and Marie also, then goes to Edward and Grandma, to greet Edward.)*

EDWARD *(putting out his hand)*: Kate!

KATE *(dropping her glance)*: Edward. I never dreamed of seeing you tonight. *(They shake hands.)*

EDWARD: Something simply drew me back to this place, Kate. Mother knows that.

DICK *(to Grandma. Takes both her hands)*: Well, how is Grandma?

GRANDMA: God bless, you Dick. I'm happy as a lark.

HELEN (*kisses Grandma*): I'm so glad to see you again.

MARIE: Hello, Grandma! (*Grandma kisses her.*)

GRANDMA: My, but isn't that a pretty doll.

(*Marie shows her how doll opens and closes her eyes.*)

EDWARD (*noticing Grandpa*): Well, how is Grandpa? (*Shake hands affectionately.*) You still look as young and happy as you did twelve years ago.

GRANDPA: Thank you, Edward. I feel that way, too, tonight.

KATE: I can't tell you how happy I am to see you all.

EDWARD (*to Grandpa and John*): How you all have changed. Everything is different, even in the town. I suppose that's since John is mayor.

JOHN: Yes, Ed; when one has been gone for twelve years, a lot of things change.

EDWARD (*goes to Grandma, puts arm around her shoulder*): Yes, John. But mother is still the same to all.

GRANDMA: Thank heaven you are here, my boy. I have prayed for this every day and I had almost given up hopes. But God is good, my boy. God is good.

EDWARD: Really, I cannot say how happy I am to be at home again, mother. What can I do to make you happy? All that I have belongs to you.

GRANDMA: Edward, my boy, you are the best gift the good Lord has given me.

(*Children pass candy, saying*): "Have some of my candy! Take some of mine, too! etc. (*All help themselves.*)

DICK (*takes a sucker and licks it*): Gee, but it feels great to be home again.

GRANDPA: Yes, Dick, and thanks to the Christchild, who has reunited us all. You are still our little boys, only grown up.

DICK: I didn't think we would get here tonight. The trains are all late. When did you get our telegram?

GRANDPA: Got it tonight, just before you came. The wires here have been down for a week, and the weather was the worst ever seen. I sent you a telegram the day after Christmas, but they did not get it off till this afternoon.

DICK: You sent a telegram? Why? Did something happen?

GRANDPA: Oh, no, nothing serious happened here, but I thought something had happened to you because you did not write to us.

DICK: Yes, father, many things have happened. I'll tell you all about it later. But everything is all right again. Edward has made us all happy.

HELEN: It's a wonder we arrived here at all. The snow is so high, I don't see how we ever got through. (*Marie talks to Grandma. Kate goes to fireplace. Edward follows her and they talk in undertone.*)

GERTRUDE: You must be tired, Helen. We will have lunch as soon as the New Year comes in.

HELEN: Oh, I'm not tired; I've had plenty of sleep on the train.

JOHN: They must be running on a new system then.

EDWARD: We would have stopped at Chicago to see Margaret, but I wanted to be home tonight.

JOHN: We expect Margaret in a few days. She's coming with her husband.

HELEN: What a beautiful tree!

GRANDMA (*to children*): Come here, children. Marie, this is Alfred and George and Rose. They will play with you.

MARIE: Papa and mama told me lots about you all! Did you get lots of toys?

GEORGE (*takes Marie by arm, leads her to tree. Excitedly*): I got a sled and some skates and a rocking horse.

(*All children follow to tree.*)

ALFRED: And I got a steam engine and an aeroplane.

ROSE: And I got a big doll, too, that can close her eyes, and a bed.

ROSE, GEORGE and ALFRED (*speaking together excitedly*):

ROSE: And we got candy and cake— GEORGE: —and walnuts and ice cream— ALFRED: —and a Christmas goose, and I had a stomach ache—

(*Children pause, out of breath—short pause.*)

MARIE: Gee! I guess you kids never had to live in New York.

(*All the grown-ups laugh. Chimes strike twelve; sounds without, shots, bells, whistles, etc. All shout "Happy New Year."*)

JOHN: Let's go out and hear it. Come this way. You can hear it better out here. (*Exit John, dining room. All follow except Kate, seated at fireplace, and Edward standing, looking into fireplace. Grandpa leaving last. Edward goes to French windows.*)

GRANDPA: Be careful now, children, there's some mistletoe in this house. (*Exit Grandpa, dining room.*) (*Short pause.*)

EDWARD (*After listening for awhile at window returns to Kate.*) Kate! (*Kate rises, drops eyes.*) You hear those bells ringing in the New Year. I wonder what it has in store for us. I have been gone long, I know, Kate, but I have never forgotten you. It has been a hard struggle for me. I have fought it out alone, but I can do it no longer. (*Coming somewhat closer.*) I want someone to help me, Kate. I want to begin a new life. I feel that after all these long sad years we might be happy still. My faith in God has made me a man again, Kate, and there is only one thing lacking to make me entirely happy tonight—happier than I deserve. (*Taking both her hands, speaks tenderly.*) Kate, I want you! (*Kate smiles up into his face happily, and embraces him.*)

KATE: Edward!

CURTAIN.

(*The following may be used instead, after Grandpa's lines, if more desirable*):

(*All leave but Kate and Edward. Kate may be fingering keys of piano or looking dreamily into fireplace.*)

EDWARD (*coming toward her*): Penny for your thoughts, Kate. (*Kate rises, leaving one hand on piano or chair and smiles, looking at him.*)

EDWARD: Do you remember, Kate, the golden long ago when we sat together by this dear old fireplace?

KATE: Yes, Ed. How could I forget it?

EDWARD: I've been gone long, I know, Kate, but I have never forgotten it. When I think of all these long sad years we might have been together, Kate. But the bells are ringing in a new year, Kate. Let's go out and hear them. (*Extends hand.*)

(*Kate takes it, and he puts his arms around her waist and both walk out together.*)

CURTAIN.

GRANDPA'S CHRISTMAS STORY.

The gentle flakes of winter's earliest snow
Fall down from heaven silently and slow;
I hear the whistles of the factories blow
And from their toils the tired laborers go
Homeward, all home, and darkness hovers low.

Sweet memories of home they bring to me
And of the little village and the lea
Which I, to set my restless spirit free,
Left long ago and set sail hopefully
On the same ship my father sailed the sea.

Since then full many a year has rolled away,
But I remember well the happy day
That brought me home again. Our vessel lay
At anchor in the harbor of this bay
Where we unloaded, having come to stay.

(Very soft music, "Silent Night," played by violin.)

It was the eve of Christmas—Happily
The children's voices echoed o'er the lea;
The snow was slowly falling—I could see
The light within the houses from the sea,
And people carrying home their Christmas tree.

Then came the ringing of the evening bell
Through the still air, of old the same sweet knell
Telling the day is done and all is well;
And holy peace and happiness—a spell
Came over me that I could never tell.

Then all the wicked world looked good and kind
And dreams of heaven entered in my mind;
I never thought such happiness to find,
But He who helps the feeble and the blind
Had come again, the Savior of Mankind.

And all my homesick heart did wander home
For it to me into a world had grown—
The ocean told me in its mournful moan:
In every life there is a time to roam,
But Christmas is the time to be at home.

So when the work was ended and the day
Had died in darkness, I was on the way
Which led me homeward to my mother. Gray
And feeble was she now, and I did say
This time, dear mother, I have come to stay.

Then tears of gladness filled her loving eyes,
She clasped her hands about me in surprise
And love that I could never realize,
And called a blessing on me from the skies;
And sure a mother's blessing never dies.

And father, too, a seaman stout and strong,
Pressed my cold hand in his and held it long;
His hair had turned snow-white since I had gone,
Yet he and mother joined the Christmas song
And so we whiled the happy hours along.

This is the village, but how changed the sight;
See how the spires stretch their giddy height,
How the big buildings glare with grandeur bright,
Yet from the dwellings gleams a kindlier light—
Let us go home, this is the holy night.

MAXIMS.

KIND WORDS.

As the gentle drops of water
Wear away the hardest stone,
So the tender words of kindness
Wear away the hardest heart.

THE FOOL.

'Tis only a fool who offers his health
For the sake of pleasure, fame or wealth—
The wise man knows when to relent,
But the fool will stay till his life is spent.

LIVE.

Live your life! Laugh your laugh!
Love your love! Sing your song!
The world will still go on
When you are gone.

A FIRESIDE DREAM.

I sat by the fading fire
When the flame was burning low,
And the night wind was a-sighing
Till it made the embers glow.

I heard the solemn ticking
Of the melancholy clock,
And the little restless clicking
Of the key within the lock.

For the cold north wind was knocking

At the door to let him in,
While the fire on the hearth-stone
Was growing very dim.

I watched the spark expire,
And leave me alone in the dark—
And the frozen panes of the windows
Looked at me grim and stark.

Then I thought of my love, departed
To her home in eternity,
And in my enchanted fancy
Her image I could see.

Fair as the pure white lily,
Or the well-kept lamb of the fold:
It carried away all my troubles,
And made me forget of the cold.

For her heart was as warm as the fire,
And her eyes were as bright as its light,
But the spark of that life expired
And left me alone in the night.

And I saw the dull gray ashes
Had covered the coals that glow'd,
As on my head growing aged
The ashes of age now show'd.

Though our life be like the fire,
That kindles and burns and dies,
Yet in the minds of our loved ones
Our image still survives.

A DREAM OF ST. NICHOLAS.

FOR DECEMBER SIXTH.

It was the eve of St. Nicholas,
Full many a winter ago,
And on the dining-room table
We had set our plates in a row.

The old clock was solemnly ticking—
It seemed altogether too slow,
For we were expecting St. Nicholas,
And that is the cause, you might know.

Without the cold north wind was blowing
And wailing so mournful and low,
And the silvery moonlight was shining
On the cold and hard-frozen snow.

But we were warm in our blankets,
Filled with sweet thoughts of delight,
When Sleep came and closed our eyelids
And shut all the world from our sight.

I had a most wonderful vision,
In a beautiful dream that night—
I saw the home of St. Nicholas
In the starry valley of light.

He was just leaving his dwelling
In a silvery sleigh shining bright,—
And, giving a sign to his reindeer,
They started at once on their flight.

The happy children were singing
And playing in paradise,
While St. Nicholas, fast as the lightning,
Went down to the earth through the skies.

Wherever he found some good children,
He put candy and nuts on each plate,
And when he had finished his journey
He hastened back home to the gate.

When he was again up in heaven,
And his reindeer were put in their barn,
He showed God the names of the children,
In two books he had under his arm.

These children are working for Christmas
And helping to make people glad,
But here in this book, I am sorry,
Are written the names of the bad.

The names of the good were all golden,
But black were the names of the bad;
Oh! I thought that mine was among them,
And it made my heart feel so sad.

But when I awoke from my dreaming,
A wonderful sight met my eyes;
When I came down the stairs that bright morning,
I shouted aloud in surprise.

For there stood our plates on the table,
And everyone filled to a heap
With candy and nuts and some playthings—
That for joy we all had to leap.

Since that time, I tell you, my children,
A mighty good boy I have been;
My name will sure go in the Good Book
When St. Nicholas comes 'round again.

MOTHER'S DAY.

BY HELEN M. LETHERT.

This day, of all in memory's fondest gleaming,
Brings thoughts of you, and of the bygone days.
Your tender love, unselfish, ever gleaming,
Your sympathy will ease the heart always.
Your cheerful words make care and duties lighter,
Your happy spirit makes the world look brighter.

Your noble life gives to the home a meaning,
Your influence remains, though youth may roam.
The sick and lonely child to you is leaning,
A thought of mother brings the wayward home.
The heavy heart finds solace in no other
As in the sweet, inspiring name of MOTHER.

WHEN MOTHER IS ABOUT.

Life is so sweet, and so complete
When mother is about;
There is someone who loves you true,
Consoles you and caresses you,
Though all the world oppresses you,
Dear mother still she blesses you.

When you have toiled the live long day
And homeward then you wend your way,
How happy is your heart to find
A mother's face so sweet and kind.

Her loving smile, her gentle kiss,
Ah, mother dear, what bliss is this!
What true harmonious perfect peace
That all too soon must die and cease.

For when her place is vacant
Oh, what a change to meet!
Your heart speaks out with sadness
"No mother there to greet."

No joy or grief to share with her,
So lovely and so sweet;
Someone is missing at the hearth,
All is so incomplete.

THE WRECK OF THE NOBLE.

DULUTH'S HARBOR LIGHTS WERE OUT THE NIGHT OF THIS WRECK. AT THAT TIME THEY HAD NO FACILITIES FOR LIGHTING THEM FROM SHORE BY ELECTRICITY.

Out in the angry billow and wave,
The steamer Noble with twenty brave,

Fighting the storm in that night so dark,
When not a star lent a kindly spark;
But on that desert of water and wave
The seamen cried, "O, save us, save!
Until we reach the harbor and see
The lights that welcome us home from the sea.
"What a wonderful story we'll all have to tell
Of the angry waves that we fought so well—
Glad will the wife and the children be,"
Said the men. "They are waiting anxiously."
And one said, "Mother I can plainly see
Is watching and waiting and praying for me."

The storm rolled on with its awful roar
Till the hearts of the sailors grew sick and sore,
Yet they sailed her on till they saw no more,
Till death rose out of that water grave
And the sailors cried, "God save us, save!"
Yet no answer came but the hissing wave.

"We're lost! We're lost!" the captain said,
"Before the dawn we'll all be dead,
I see no lights to guide us on,
We lost our course, we must have gone
Away from the harbor." Upon the deck
Fell the surging waves, bringing ruin and wreck,
And pallid faces of seamen shone,
As they heard the dirge of the sea in its moan,
And their thoughts were of loved ones behind them at home.

Then came the dash of destruction and death,
The ship whirled round, and short as a breath,
The lives of those poor unfortunate men
Were cut away—Yet they might have been
All saved; if the lights in the harbor had shone
The ship would have safely been guided home,
But now they are buried in graves unknown
That the sorrowful sea will never disown.

THANKSGIVING.

When the old folks are awaitin'
Fir their children to come home,
And old grandpa is a' smilin'
Happier than iver known.

And old grandma is preparin'
Many good things fir to eat,
And the stove out in th' kitchen,
Is just burnin' up with heat.

When the fry cakes and th' biscuits
And th' cookies and th' cakes

And the cranberries and turkeys
Seem perfum'd, fir goodness sakes!

You might know there's no misgivin'
'Bout th' tim when this takes place,
Guess yer know it's ole Thanksgivin
I can see it in yer face.

Thank th' Lord fir dear ole motner,
Sure you'll niv'r find a cook
That kin make things good as she kin
And she doesn't need a book.

A SOLDIER'S REVERIE.

All hearts in thee united are
My own America!
All hopes are 'neath thy guiding star
For justice is thy law.

My country of the true and brave,
Dear home of Liberty,
O'er land and sea forever wave
Thy emblem of the free.

Each color for a virtue stands,
The flag red, white and blue
Flaunts over Freedom's blessed lands,
Flaunts o'er the silent true.

Red represents the patriots' blood
That flow'd from Freedom's hearth
White represents the deeds of good
Where mothers bore their part.

It is the banner of the brave,
And sure the somber blue
Stands for the heroes in the grave,
The noble hearts so true.

Who cannot feel a thrill of pride
To see this banner wave,
And mourn the men who for it died?
It's waving o'er their grave.

And when the tyrant lifts his hand
Assaulting Liberty,
With God we all will take our stand
To guard her sanctity.



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