

THEIR CHRISTMAS MOTHER

Three Lonely People Play a Game of Fellowship

BY CHARLOTTE OONKRIGHT KIMNEY

Five o'clock and Christmas eve. "A from one to the other. She was very regular story-book Christmas eve!" smiled Kathleen Davis, as she picked her way, stopping now and then to look in an attractive store window, through the hurrying, gift-laden crowd. "It couldn't be better if it had been made to order!"

Great, feathery snowflakes filled the air. Everywhere were festoons of cedar and holly, glittering trees, all the glorious jumble of things that mark the great Holiday. And above it all, to give the finishing and perfect touch, the cathedral bells at the end of the street chiming:

"Joy to the World! The Lord is come!"

"Joy, good will, friendliness. Yes, that is the keynote of Christmas!" Kathleen said to herself.

Presently she stopped by a brilliantly lighted shop window and studied the faces of some of the crowd. It was a Christmas pageant. She liked to imagine the part in the night's drama that each was playing. She hoped that it was a happy one and that they were all hurrying somewhere where love awaited them.

A dignified, distinguished-looking, judge-like gentleman caught her attention. She laughed. The wind had blown away most of the wrapping-paper from the bundle he was carrying, revealing a dashing red-and-gray rocking-horse. The absurd pony was delightfully incongruous with the old gentleman's outward dignity.

"One of the nicest things about Christmas," thought Kathleen, almost speaking the words aloud, "is that it makes us children again."

A cripple passed. He was poorly dressed but his face was an inspiration. "Tiny Tim," she named him. Next came a kindly-faced Irish woman who, she judged, was taking all the poor children in her block to visit some department-store Santa Claus. She had her hands full managing the brood but oh, the fun she was having!

"That's real giving," thought Kathleen. "She's giving herself and that is the only real gift."

Two women approached. They stood for a second looking in the window. Their faces were hard and brilliant as posters. "She only gave me a cheap box of stationery last Christmas," snapped one, "and I gave her an expensive pair of silk stockings. Well, she'll not get much from me this year." They walked away.

Kathleen was infinitely sorry for them. She joined the moving crowd. Her plans were indefinite. "I guess I'm the only one that's not hurrying somewhere!" Her face was wistful. She really had no place to go except to the room in her hotel. She longed like a homesick child for home—a place where a lighted tree shone in the window, where a little supper, a fire in the grate and Mother awaited her.

This was the first year since Kathleen could remember when Mother and she had not kept Christmas together. So much can happen in a year. Life can be very cruel. When Mother was with her they had always been poor but they had been happy although she had never been able to buy the many things she had wished for Mother. And then after it was too late, success suddenly came to her and money. Not a great deal, of course, but enough to have made Mother very comfortable. Now, she told herself bitterly, she could buy the comforts, even a few of the luxuries she had always desired—the clothes, all the dear, entrancing things that women love, the books, the plays, music, flowers—and Mother was gone.

She came to a flower shop. From behind the frosted glass, orchids, gardenias, sweet peas smiled out at her. And there in the midst of this fairy garden was the very kind of a Christmas bouquet she would have liked to take home to Mother. She had always given her flowers, the less expensive kind one buys in bunches done up in tissue paper at the elevated stations. But to send Mother, at Christmas, distinctive, out-of-the-season flowers tied up with ribbon in a bewitching box. For a long time she stood thoughtfully before the window. Then a delightful idea came to her. She went in.

"I should like to see that lovely bunch of lilies of the valley in the window." Her eyes glowed. They were her mother's favorite flower. She asked to have them arranged in a corsage. "A bit of green, violets and a pink rose or two for color. Lovely! Tie with silver ribbon." It was exquisite. She watched him arrange them in a darling box. "I'll take it with me."

Outside, she hurried along with the rest of the crowd. Her eyes danced as she hugged the ribboned box. At the corner she collided with a fat man carrying home a huge lamp shade. They both laughed good-naturedly. "The part of the Christmas pageant now, too," thought Kathleen and in her heart sang a song of enchantment.

In Rosenberg's department store, up on the twelfth floor, Mrs. Mary Scott, an elderly frail woman was trying not to look as weary as she felt. Ordinarily the store served only the noon lunch but as it was to be open late on Christmas eve, the management had made a special arrangement to keep the cafe open. She had been waiting on table all day. She tried to ease her aching feet by shifting her weight

from one to the other. She was very patient as one is apt to be patient at sixty-three when one is alone in the world and upon one's own resources.

Mrs. Scott, since the untimely death of her only daughter, a music teacher, had found few positions available to a gentlewoman of her years who had no specialized training. She was therefore grateful for her present position and was most conscientious and faithful. Thoughtful people, people with imagination, must have noticed her at once.

"Who was that sweet-faced old lady? What was she doing here?" they would ask. In her dainty white blouse with its touch of Irish crochet—carrying its hint of better days—she looked like a sweet mother. You had a sudden longing, as you watched her, to take away the heavy tray she was carrying. You wanted to seat her at the table and serve and protect her.

"Seems like people might get their shopping done daytimes," thought Mrs. Scott as she folded napkins. "I hope it's working people who have no other time who'll be here to-night and not the rich folks who thoughtlessly wait for their shopping till the last minute."

A man on the eleventh floor, in the music department, was singing jazz through a megaphone—something about moonlight and blues.

"Jazz on Christmas eve!" she sighed. She was getting fresh linen on her table. There were not many in the restaurant. She was grateful for a few quiet moments. Again she heard the jazz. "How far we have wandered away from the true meaning of Christmas," she thought. She recalled some past Christmas eves. She saw Marian, her daughter, and the glowing faces of school children as they sang:

"Silent Night! Holy Night! All is calm, all is bright."

That was what the world needed—more peace, less of excitement and this feverish, tinsel happiness and more of the real and natural joys of life. She wished she had it in her power to send away all those tired, confused, over-laden shoppers, down there in the stifling air of the music department, with that quiet song in their hearts instead of the echo of jazz. And Marian. Her patient lips quivered. Tears gathered in her eyes and she quickly brushed them away. It wouldn't do to have a patron see her crying. How different this Christmas might have been if Marian had lived.

A young woman came in and seated herself at one of Mrs. Scott's tables. She wore the gray fur coat and toque that Mrs. Scott had come to know so well, for she often visited the lunch room. To-night there was a touch of holly in her color scheme. It was "Miss Delight"—Mrs. Scott's private name for her. She had attracted Mrs. Scott's attention because she always asked to be seated at her tables and while not old-fashioned she was not like the young girls Mrs. Scott usually served. "Miss Delight" was decidedly pretty and always well dressed. From her thoughtful, sweet expression Mrs. Scott was sure that she was not the kind of girl who smoked cigarettes, drank cocktails and danced "till all hours." In time, they learned each other's names and each felt the kindly spirit of the other. "Something about her reminds me of Marian," said Mrs. Scott. Whenever "Miss Delight" came to her table, it was Mrs. Scott's happiest moment of the day—that is, almost the happiest. For there was another bright occasion when a tall, good-looking young man with adorable brown eyes, appeared. He, too, was a regular daily visitor and he and Mrs. Scott also had become friendly.

Most of the people at Mrs. Scott's tables were merely people. They could be duplicated anywhere. Only "Miss Delight" and the Man-with-the-Adorable-Brown-Eyes were individuals. What interested Mrs. Scott at first, was the fact that they came there at all. By their bearing and clothes, they belonged to a higher-class place. It interested and amused her. They had never met, as far as she knew, yet day after day they came, usually at the same hour, she at the little table by the window, he across the aisle. However, she had an odd conviction that Rosenberg's, as far as these young people were concerned, existed solely as a place for seeing one another.

"I wish," she had often smiled, "I could be the head waitress. I'd seat them together! You don't often see shyness in youngsters nowadays. They encased themselves to her the more because of their old-fashioned



Have as much variety as possible in the home-made candies you give your friends in the festive season.

standards. She made two interesting discoveries which she kept to herself. She found Miss Delight's pretty face faintly sketched all over the young man's menu. And one day the Delightful Lady had scribbled a bit of poetry on the back of an envelope and forgotten it:

"But all remembered beauty is no more Than a vague prelude to the thought of you— Lover of beauty, knightliest and best."

To-night Mrs. Scott had not dreamed of seeing Kathleen Davis. Evidently, neither had Mr. Robert Harper, for he was not there. Mrs. Scott came pleasantly forward to take her order.

"Merry Christmas!" smiled Kathleen, her eyes sparkling like sapphires.

"Merry Christmas!" smiled back the White-Rose Lady, as Kathleen had privately named her, so sweet was her fine fragility.

"Just bring me a cup of chocolate and a sandwich—any kind. I'm not hungry, I just came to see you!" In a few moments the White-Rose Lady returned. When she had daintily arranged the order on the table, Kathleen tucked into Mrs. Scott's trembling hands the forlorn's box.

"Why—why, my dear, it's lovely of you! I . . . " her voice broke. Regardless of convention, Kathleen slipped an arm about her. "I know," she said softly. "They make you think of past Christmases and happiness." Her own eyes were a bit misty. "I'm going to tell you something. I've been coming here to lunch so often mostly because you make me think of my mother."

"Dear child!" "Yes. And I've a plan. I want to adopt a Christmas Mother for tomorrow. If you will give me your address, I'll call for you—unless you have some other engagement—say at two. We'll have dinner somewhere down town and spend the day together."

"Bless your heart!" beamed the White-Rose Lady. "How lovely! I have no engagement but . . . you're not doing this, dear, just to be nice to me—because I told you about my daughter?"

"To-morrow I'll tell you everything—I mean about Mother and why I want to do this. Please don't refuse! If you knew how I dreamed of this Christmas. There is one condition. For one day you are to play you are, really my mother and let me do all the things for you I would love to do for her."

"I think I understand," quietly smiled the White-Rose Lady. "There'll be my condition too. If I'm to be your mother, you're to be my little girl. It's to be a Christmas game for two alone people to escape loneliness?" "That's it! I knew you'd understand. To-morrow at two . . . And wear your flowers. Good night, Christmas Mother!" She was gone, but she had left behind her a trail of fairylight, a fragrance, a song. The rest of the evening did not matter.

Christmas day! Promptly at two, a gray-furred figure ran quickly up the steps of the address Mrs. Scott had given her.

Mrs. Scott answered the bell, not

ready for the street, but in a huge white apron over a well-preserved black silk dress.

"Merry Christmas, dear girl! Come in. I have a surprise for you."

Kathleen was at once conscious of unmistakable and delectable odors of home at dinner time—Christmas-dinner time with turkey, cranberry, plum pudding. Mrs. Scott half led, half pushed her "daughter" into a cheery dining room with a table set for three. There were spotless linen and pretty dishes and shining silver. Christmas candles stood on the buffet. In the centre of the table bloomed the Christmas bouquet. "Am I dreaming—Mother?"

"No. Your plan was the dream. You're going to have dinner here with me," the Christmas Mother said simply. "After you left last night, I remembered that the Smiths—I rent a room from them—were going to be away to-day. I called up Mrs. Smith and asked her if I might give a dinner. She told me to make myself at home. Take off your things, dear. Put them there in my room. You see?"

"You longed for a Christmas Mother. And I got to thinking how you always had to be eating in restaurants and cafes and I thought maybe seeing I was to be Mother to-day, you'd enjoy staying home and having a bit of real home cooking for a change."

"Oh, Mother Scott, how wonderful of you! It's exactly the home kind of a Christmas I've been longing for but you should have let me share it. And my dear," glancing at the little table, "there are three. Who in the world beside you and me?"

"That's my secret," smiled the Christmas Mother, "but I'll tell you this much—I rather think you'll enjoy our Christmas guest."

"Mystery!" Kathleen threw her arms about the white-aproned figure and kissed her. "I suspect it's some forlorn newsboy, tramp or poor woman you've rescued. But nothing can surprise me now not even if it's the Prince of Wales."

Suddenly the door bell. "Oh, my goodness!" laughed the Christmas Mother, flushing like a girl expecting a sweetheart. "Tell me, does my hair look all right?"

"You're a picture just as you are—a Christmas picture."

Mrs. Scott, her cheeks a pink as the Christmas rose, threw open the door and Kathleen heard her greet— "Welcome! Welcome, dear boy! And Merry Christmas! Come right in. Put your hat and coat here. What? Another gift? My! My!"

Kathleen peeked around the door and—gasped. It was he—the Sir Galahad of Rosenberg's!

"Miss Davis, allow me to present Mr. Harper. Kathleen—Bob—my Christmas children."

"You see," explained the young man to Kathleen, "she's adopted me, too." Evidently Bob had been let into the Mother secret.

And Kathleen said something about "such a lovely idea . . ."

Mother, with glowing eyes, was opening her basket. "My! My! Isn't this lovely? Strawberries, grapes, persimmons, pears . . . Oh, you dear extravagant children . . . fruit and flowers in mid-winter."

Kathleen made a place on the table for the handsome basket. She took off a rose and a few lilies of the valley and pinned them on the breast of the Christmas Mother.

They lighted the Christmas candles and Bob named Mother Scott at the table as if she had been a queen. He insisted on carving and neither one of them would let the Mother lift a finger to serve them. It was the jolliest of dinners. It seemed as if they all had known each other for years. And how good things tasted!

"Did you tell Kathleen about the play to-night?" asked Bob. (In the spirit of the game they spoke to each other intimately.)

"Oh, no! Bob has invited us to a play, dear."

"Us? When did you know?" Kathleen demanded of the young man, greatly surprised, "that I would be here?"

"It was like this," explained Mother. "After you went away last night, along comes Mr. Bob with this big box of candy. He saw the lights and thought maybe we'd be open. I guess he thought that he was the loneliest man in the city. He seemed like a lost soul. I saw how it was . . . we three all being lonely with no folks or place to go to but to a show or the movies. Christmas is a home day. So I thought we'd have just our own Christmas party."

"Dear Mother Scott!" . . . Over the fruit and candy they exchanged confidences. Kathleen was a short story writer. Bob was a commercial artist. "I do everything from ham and eggs and beauty-clays to silk stockings and grand pianos." He had a sudden inspiration. "Mother Scott, you must let me paint you as you look to-day for my Mother's Day poster. Wouldn't she be great, Kathleen?"

"Speaking of pictures," said Kathleen addressing the other guest, "you remind me of some picture or person—I don't know which—I've seen."

"You feel that way, too? How many times I've wanted to speak to you in the restaurant but I didn't dare. I've always wondered where I have seen you or someone like you."

"You couldn't possibly ever have lived in the little town of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia?"

"Sure! I lived there until I was fourteen. My father was Douglas Harper. We lived near the East Ward School."

"Then I have seen you!" cried Kathleen happily. "I lived over in the West Ward on Haliburton Avenue with my grandparents. Do you recall Captain Casterlin? He was my grandfather. And do you remember the exercises at Central School when all the schools used to get together? Didn't you speak pieces?"

"Why, yes. I remember one was 'The Incheape Rock' and 'The Death of Napoleon'."

He hadn't thought of those old recitations in years. He laughed, saying, "The kids in school nowadays never even heard of them."

"And could you—no, of course you couldn't—remember a small girl who sometimes sang?—once it was 'Comin' through the Rye'?"

But he did! "You carried a tiny parasol and danced between the stanzas!"

"Yes, yes. Why, you do remember." "Well, now, here's another of those unexpected happenings," exclaimed the Mother. "It's a good thing I planned this party so you could find out all this."

Their eyes said eloquently that it was a very good thing. The little party became a gayer affair than ever. Dinner over, they insisted on Mother Scott resting.

"You won't be able to enjoy the play to-night if you don't."

They chatted and laughed and worked and between spells ran to the piano. They sang "Noel" and "Little Town of Bethlehem." Presently Bob began "Mother Machree."

"Sure I love the dear silver that shines in your hair, And the brow that's all furrowed and wrinkled with care."

Oh, God bless you and keep you, Mother Machree!

"The darlings!" Tears filled her eyes. It had been such a happy day! Oh, how good they had been to her! "Dear Marian! Dear Mother of Kathleen! If you can know, I'm sure you're glad that I gave them this chance to be happy. It was my part in the Christmas game—the gift of their Christmas Mother."

In the Stable.

What must the Virgin progeny for him have been? She surely knew no art.

Could ever more the little satin feet that, smiling in her pails, she found so sweet.

Those things the angel told her! Did they seem Now in this darkened stable like a dream?

They must have floated through her gentle mind In reminiscent wonder. Did she find Her heart affluted with strange pangs and awe

While looking on that wee bed in the straw?

What had it meant? (This little child, her own!)

Those solemn words: "His father David's throne!"

"That holy thing which shall be born of thee!"

"The Son of God!" Oh, pale young mother, she Must surely have bowed low, remembering:

"Yea, Lord, yea, Lord, this holy, holy thing!"

—Bartha Gerneaux Woods, In Youthful Companion.

Yuletide.

Oh! merry piping time of Christmas! Never let us permit thee to degenerate into distant courtesies and formal salutations. But let us shake our friends and familiars by the hand, as our fathers and their fathers did. Let them all come around us, and let us count how many the year has added to our circle. Let us enjoy the present and laugh at the past. Let us tell old stories and invent new ones—innocent always, and ingenious, if we can. Let us not meet to abuse the world, but to make it better by our individual example. Let us be patriots, but not men of party. Let us look of the time—cheerful and generous, and endeavor to make others as cheerful and generous as ourselves. Draw the curtains, pile fresh wood on the hearth, and bring your chairs to the blazing fire.—Charles Lamb.

A Christmas World.

If we were to fancy a wholly Christianized world, it would be a world inspired by the spirit of Christmas—a bright, friendly, beneficent, generous, sympathetic, mutually helpful world. A man who is habitually mean, selfish, narrow, is a man without Christmas in his soul. Let us cling to Christmas all the more as a day of the spirit which in every age some souls have believed to be the possible spirit of human society. The earnest faith and untiring endeavor which see in Christmas a forecast are more truly Christian, surely, than the pleasant cynicism of the atheists, which smiles upon it as the festival of a futile hope. Meanwhile we may reflect that from good-natured hopelessness to a Christmas world may not be farther than from star dust to a solar system.—George William Curtis.

Ham Contest for the Holiday Party.

1. The ham that is a small village—hamlet.
2. The ham used by a carpenter—hammer.
3. The ham that is a bed or seat—hammock.
4. The ham that goes to market or impedes motion—hamper.
5. The ham that is a burrowing animal like a rat—hamster.
6. The ham where lace curtains come from— Nottingham.
7. The unsteady ham—Rockingham.
8. The ham that is a sort of fowl—hambury.
9. A boy's name, a letter and a nice piece of meat—Sydenham.
10. Another boy's name, the son of Noah—Ham.
11. Name of a city—that is, this contest, sick, and 2,000 lbs.—Hamilton.



The Modern Santa.

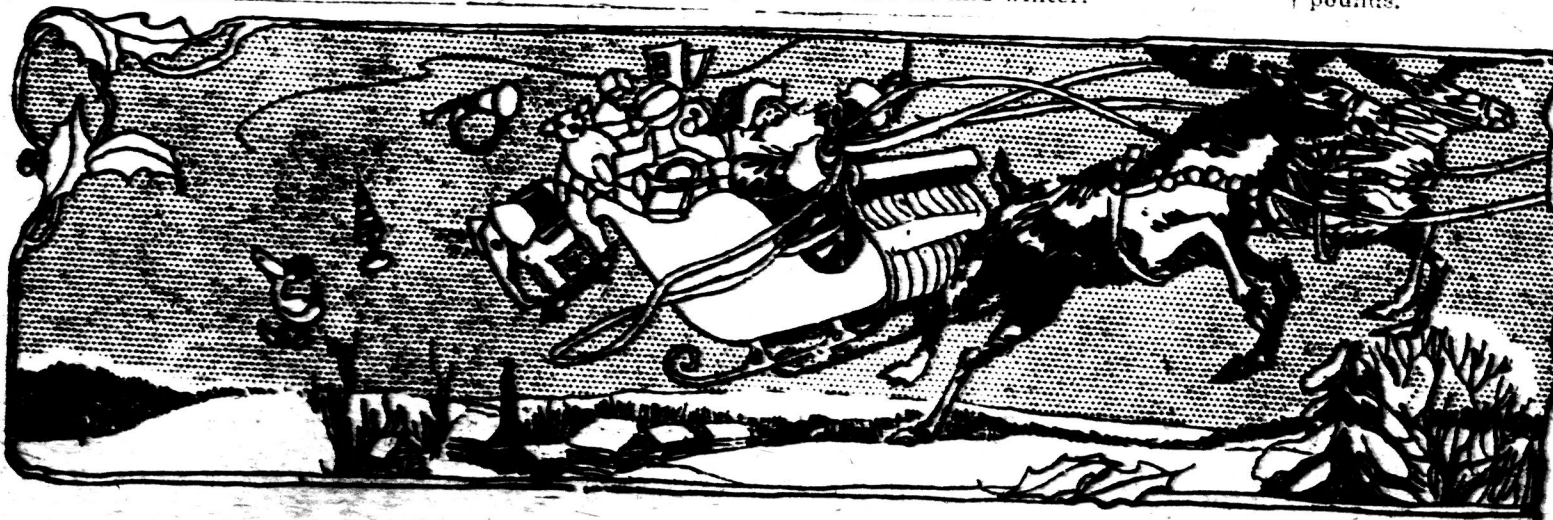
"Is Santa Claus gonna trocha good this year?"

"I don't know. I called him up and engaged a case if he's got it by Christmas."



A Large One.

Mean Santa—"Great Scott, that must be Willie Hippo's stocking, if I see that I won't have anything for any one else!"



In
US
is rev
fresh
Black

George E

George Eliot's
was excell
the good. H
beautiful awok
still a child; it
life of long fam
European art;
Ruskin's constan
quite important
art. It is easy
look what art h
Yet, if the good,
true are ultimate
day, they must
and it is our bus
do not interpret

HOW TO
CHILDREN

Avoid Serious

Baby's O

When a child s
tome of a cold, s
ness of the eyes,
nose, prompt me
avert serious res
always have on
safe and effective
use use.

Baby's Own T
contain no opiate
tasteless and har
Cadieux. Holyok
have used Baby's
children and find
now medicine. W
had a cold I gave
night and he was
give them to the d
tion, and they al
Baby's Own Tab
give a child the
counsel the
who have sim
have they should
hand."

Baby's Own Ta
medicine dealers
mail at 25 cents
Williams' Medici
Ont.

The Boy

We go for a walk
Down to the sea,
low.
Finished my work
play,
And we wait for
go.

The gold of the s
out.
The foothills dark
sea,
For dusk has put a
"It's morning in th
—Lamb.

Minard's Uniment

Fa

TO BE OF SERV
needs in securing c
will continue its
Service, as last y
Through experie
with a number of
France, Holland,
Belvia, Germany an
help.

In order to have the
needed help must
be help needed.

Blank application fo
obtained from any
THE CANAD
Depart

MONTREAL

TORONTO

SHERRBOURNE

SAINT JOHN

KEENOVILLE

OTTAWA

M. L. T. TORONTO