

# THEIR CHRISTMAS MOTHER

## Three Lonely People Play a Game of Fellowship.

—BY CHARLOTTE CONKRIGHT KINNEY.

Five o'clock and Christmas eve. "A 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 critic's passed. He was poorly dressed but his face was an inspiration. "Tiny Time," 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 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 gazed. 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. "I'm 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



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 florist's box.

"Why—why, my dear, it's lovely of you!" 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 know 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

Kathleen made a place on the table for the handsome basket. She broke 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 seated 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 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 Gasterlin?" 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 Inchcape 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."

Volcanic ash is found in large beds in several localities in Southern British Columbia. It has also been reported recently from near Swift Current, Saskatchewan. Material from the Saskatchewan deposit is already being used as an ingredient in scouring soaps and other cleansing compounds.

### In the Stable.

What must her Virgin prayers for Him have been Her child and God's? She surely knew no sin Could ever snare the little satin feet That, nestling in her palm, 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 reminiscence wonder. Did she find Her heart afflutter 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.

"Yes, Lord, yes, Lord, this holy, holy thing!" —Bertha Gerneaux Woods, in Youth's 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 atheist, 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 tretcha 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.

Monk Santa—"Great Scott, that must be Willie Hippo's stocking. If I'll that I won't have anything for any one else!"

### HAPPINESS IN USEFUL TOYS

The toys we buy may be selected so that the children will reproduce in their play the things that prepare them for life.

Housekeeping toys appeal to the domestic instinct of a little girl. There is nothing that will give her more pleasure and also be more instructive than an opportunity to run a whole doll house. By this I do not mean the elaborate and costly ones, but something rather plain which she can furnish herself. Two good-sized packing boxes may be nailed together to make a two-story house, windows may be cut in the sides, and it may be treated to a coat of paint. But let her fix it up to suit herself. She may cover the walls with scraps of her own wall paper, make curtains of cheesecloth and make rugs for the floor. Gradually the different rooms can be furnished, and in the meantime there is plenty of fun and much development.

The bed for her doll could have a mattress, pillows, sheets, blankets and counterpane, in order that the small mother may learn real housekeeping. The toy bureau could be large enough to allow the doll's clothes to be put away with care. The table for the doll family could be large enough for setting her meals, and she may be taught with real dishes how to set the table properly. Then we could add a tiny range, correct in every detail, with doll-size enamel cooking utensils. It is very helpful for a little girl to have a plain doll that she can dress and undress and whose hair she can comb and for whom she may make clothing. Paper patterns for her baby's frock, odd pieces of material, and a toy sewing machine will interest her in the invaluable art of sewing.

She could have a complete laundry outfit—tub, wringer, boiler, clothes basket, ironing board, irons, wax, starch—and thus be taught the real way to wash and iron, how to keep flannels from shrinking and how to set colors.

With a set of rather large, smooth, plain blocks a church, a house, a barn, a silo, a set of furniture, or a whole village or farm may be constructed.

By means of buildings outfits and mechanical studies mechanics and mechanical physics in his play. The outfits consist of all the main parts used in machinery, such as pulleys, gears, pinions, axles, beams, wheels, machine screws, and so on. All these parts are standardized and interchangeable, so that a young mechanic may add to his outfit as he learns to build more intricate things. He builds big things on a small scale, his hand and mind work together constructing working models of derricks, bridges, traveling cranes, airplanes, engines, fire ladders, auto trucks and ships. He builds and learns while at play.

And when a boy grows older he can make things for himself and his home if he has a set of carpenter's tools. Of course it is poor economy to buy any but first-class tools.

The wonders of electricity may be opened up to your boy in the playroom. A boy I know has a corner of his room devoted to his electrical apparatus and though but fourteen has learned the theory of the telephone, the phonograph and the telegraph, and has put burglar alarms and electric bells in the homes of most of his neighbors, as well as in his own. His father's present to him each year usually consists of dry-cell batteries and the equipment which he needs. My son at the age of seven helped to build a toy village lighted by electricity. A toy typewriter or a printing press often develops naturally an interest in writing.

There is education in a toy model of a piano, but it is best to select one with two or three octaves of the chromatic scale, for which little books of simple airs are arranged.

A book on woodwork is full of suggestions and directions for the young carpenter; a book on photography, printing and developing; and one on how to study birds and trees will stimulate the right kind of activity. And the little girl will learn to cook and make doll clothes if she receives books written in a language she can easily understand.

### Making Mothers Merry.

The oldest English name for Christmas is Modra Nihl, or Mothers' Night. In the early days, when our Saxon forefathers had just settled down in the country there was to be England, the day of December 25th was given up to games and feasting, but the night was dedicated to the special honor of mothers.

They occupied the seats of honor, and everyone brought them gifts. Sons and daughters who had gone out into the world strove to be at home on that one night in the year.

A little later the name Yule was given to Christmas, and the rejoicings of the day were prolonged into the night, when men sang and told stories sitting round the cheerful blaze of the Yule log.

The old customs of Mothers' Night gradually died out, though they still survive in a few remote parts of the country. Its place has been taken to some extent by Mothering Sunday in the North of England. On that day everyone who can do so still makes a pilgrimage homewards, and the mother receives the homage of her family.

