

A Locked out Santa Claus

By JOHN KENDRICK BANGS

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FROM my earliest infancy up to the present I have always had the good fortune to believe in Santa Claus. Lots of people, old and young—particularly some very wise young people that I know—have told me that no such person exists, but I know better. The dear old saint is to my knowledge a very beautiful spirit, and every time that Christmas comes along I see him almost everywhere I turn, among the rich, the powerful, the fashionable; equally among the poor and lonely. I've seen him beaming from the comfortable cushions of a fine electric motor car speeding along the parkways, and perched happily up alongside the driver of a heavily laden truck in the dusk of a bitterly cold winter's day promoting his companion to deal gently with his weary horses and under the spell of the hour to forget the dreadful conditions of the highway, the clogging of the streets and his poor frostbitten nose and cheeks. So no one need tell me that Santa Claus does not exist or try to push the glorious old gentleman back into the realm of what the wise people call myth. I shall simply treat all such absurd statements as that with a broad grin and a wink that shows that I know better.

But I have other reasons than these for believing in Santa Claus. For once, some years ago—I shall not specify the exact date—I lay in ambush for him one Christmas morning and caught him just as he had completed his work upon my stockings, hanging from the chimney place, and made him talk to me.

"Hallo, you!" I cried, as I popped out from behind the bureau, where I had been hiding. "You're Mr. Santa Claus, aren't you?"

"Yes," he said, with a funny little laugh that made him shake so that it also shook the house. "I may as well admit it. Nothing to be ashamed of, eh?"

"No, indeed," said I. "Something to be proud of, rather, I should say."

"Thank you," said the old gentleman. "It's very good of you to say so. What can I do for you?"

"I thought I'd ask you to take me back with you to Santa Clausville," I answered. "I'd like to take a peep at those wonderful workshops of yours."

"Hi! Well, that isn't a bad idea," said he, stroking his beard thoughtfully. "But—er—what would your family think about it? Wouldn't they worry over your disappearance? They might think I'd turned kidnapper, and that would never do."

"I shouldn't be gone long," I suggested.

"Say, only for a day. I could get a good peep at things in a day, couldn't I?"

"Yes, I think you could," said Santa Claus. "But the way things go in this world there is no communication between Santa Town, or Clausburg, as some people call it, except between midnight Christmas Eve and six o'clock Christmas morning. So if you want back with me to-night it would be a whole year before you could come home again. I'm afraid you'd be awfully homesick before long, even with me, and your friends would be dreadfully worried."

"Do you only have six hours in which to do all your work?" I asked.

"That is all I have here," said Santa Claus. "That is why of late years you find me using the mails and the express companies so much in the delivery of packages. There are so many more places to be visited now than there used to be that I have been forced to have assistance. If I didn't I'd be detained here so late that I couldn't get home at all for a whole year."

"What?" I cried. "Can't even you get in after six?"

"Nope!" replied Santa Claus. "If I were one minute late in driving up to the gates of my own country I should be unable to get in."

"That's queer! Ever been locked out?" I queried.

"Once," said Santa Claus, "only once, and I assure you it was a dreadful experience. I've been particularly careful ever since to be home on time, for while I am very fond of you earth people I prefer my own home to live in. You see I'd a great many hereabouts during the holidays, but after Christmas has gone I don't seem to be quite so popular, or at any rate people don't think so much about me after the Christmas season is over. They put their minds on Abraham Lincoln and St. Valentine and other most excellent people and it is perfectly right they should. I've had my days and they are entitled to theirs."

"Tell me of that time you were locked out, won't you?" I pleaded.

"Certainly," said Santa Claus, looking at his watch. "It's only five o'clock now,

and I'm practically through this year. I'll tell you about it with pleasure. Just climb back into bed so you won't catch cold and I'll sit down alongside of you and tell you all about it."

And the dear old Saint began.

"It was two years ago," said Santa Claus. "There was an unusually large number of babies to be cared for that year, and they were just the gooddest lot you ever saw, though between you and me, I think all babies are good. When they don't seem to be as good as they might be it almost always means there's a pin sticking into them or their dinner doesn't agree with them or some other good reason which they always know. They didn't cry much at night and they spent most of their days smiling and cooing and clapping their hands gleefully. Somehow or other, while I am fond of all babies, I seemed to be particularly fond of them. Your little brother Dick, for instance, and Sammy Bronson's sister Polly—she was just the sweetest little thing that ever was."

"Yes," said I. "I know 'em both. Polly's pretty fine."

"Well, there were most a million babies like that that year, and I had something for every one of them," Santa Claus continued. "And in those days I was doing a work all by myself. So, when half-past five Christmas morning came, both my reindeer and I were dreadfully tired and sleepy. The reindeer were so tired they became nervous, and while I was fixing up the stockings in a big orphan asylum in Chicago they both took fright at a locomotive whistle half a mile away and ran away. They flew back to Clausburg and got in all right, but I had to trudge home on foot. I got there at half-past six and the gates were closed. It was a frightful situation. I knocked and knocked and knocked, but nobody came, and I realized that the case was hopeless. I

couldn't blame anybody either, because I'd made the rules myself, and in refusing to answer my summons the gatekeeper was merely obeying my orders."

"I should think you'd be glad to see people there—you're always so good natured," said I.

"That's all very true," said Santa Claus. "But you don't quite understand. We work so hard for six months of the year that we have to rest the other six. While we are sleeping we can't see people you know—we'd be awfully dull company if we did see them—and while we are working we are too busy to be interrupted. By the time I got back to Clausburg everybody's gone to sleep for the annual rest, and I could have hammered six months at the gate before I could have wakened any one of them."

"I see," said I. "Somebody might have sat up for you, though," I added.

"It's against the rules to sit up after six," said Santa Claus, and then he went on. "Well, I didn't know what to do. I wandered about outside for three or four hours, and then realized that there was only one thing to be done—make the best of it, and go back to earth again and earn my living as best I could until the gates were open again. So back to Chicago I trudged and then boarded a train for New York, making so close a connection that I hadn't time to buy a ticket. We'd got far as Kalamazoo when up comes the conductor.

"Ticket, please," he said, stopping in front of me and getting his puncher ready.

"I told him I hadn't one and asked how much the fare was to New York, intending to pay in cash.

"Thirty-six dollars," said the conductor.

"I had about ten thousand in my pocket, so this did not worry me. Taking out my wallet I counted out the necessary thirty-six one dollar bills and added ten dollars more, which I told the conductor to keep for himself in honor of the season. And then—oh dear! It was awful!" said the



old gentleman. "Perfectly awful."

"Why?" I asked. "Didn't you want to give the conductor ten dollars?"

"Oh, it wasn't that," said Santa Claus. "It wasn't that. It was the quality of my money. It was toy money, every cent of it, and I hadn't any other."

The old gentleman shook his head solemnly as he recalled the embarrassing incident.

"There I was," he resumed a moment later. "Put off the train at Kalamazoo with ten thousand dollars in my pocket and not a penny that was worth a cent."

"They didn't put you off the train?" I cried indignantly. "Didn't you tell them who you were?"

"Oh, yes—I told them," said Santa Claus, shrugging his shoulders. "But they only grinned. The conductor was one of those funny men who like to make jokes to make passengers laugh."

"I'm Santa Claus," said I, when he handed me back my toy money.

"I haven't a doubt of it," he replied. "You ought to travel in a sleigh, not in a sleeping car."

"My reindeer's in a way and I've been locked out," I explained.

"Oh, yes, I know," said he, with a wink at the other passengers. "But really, you'll have to get off here. I haven't any

orders to carry you through to New York—unless you ride in the smokestack. It's the only ghimble on the train."

"He was horrid!" said I indignantly again.

"Oh, no," said Santa Claus. "He was only doing his duty. But it was very hard for me. I got off the train and made up my mind to work until I had earned enough to pay my way to New York in American money."

"What did you do?" I asked.

"I shovelled snow," said Santa Claus, with a deep drawn sigh. "It was the only dishonest thing I ever did."

"Shovelling snow is not dishonest," Santa Claus said. "Lots of good people do it."

"That is true," said Santa Claus, "but the way I did it was not quite right. There was not much snow in Kalamazoo that year and I had to make a little of my own. I shovelled it off one sidewalk to another and then back again for a week until I had earned fifty dollars."

"I don't quite understand," said I.

"It was this way," Santa Claus replied, snapping out a diagram on the counterpane with his thumb nail. "Here was number 92 Main street with snow on the sidewalk. I shovelled that snow off number 92, throwing it upon the walk of number 94. Then I went to the people living in number 94 and was paid for shovelling it off the walk of 94. I tossed it back on the walk of 92. Then I went to 92 again and was paid for cleaning the walk another time, throwing the snow again on the walk of number 94. So I kept it up, shovelling that beautiful snow from one walk to another, backward and forward, until I had earned all the money I needed."

"It was kind of queer," said I.

"Yes," said Santa Claus. "And I've always been sorry for it. But what could I do? I had to earn my living, and really it was just as hard work as if I had simply shovelled the snow into the street. I've more than made up for it since by leaving extra presents at each of those houses at Christmas time, too—so in a way I have stoned for my mistake. Anyhow, I earned my fifty dollars and paid my fare to New York with it, reaching that city about St. Valentine's Day. And then I began a

very difficult struggle for existence. I got a position first on the elevated railroad as a guard, but I couldn't keep it because I couldn't make people step lively. I guess I was too polite. Instead of calling out, 'Step lively there!' in tones like thunder or a cannon going off suddenly and making people so nervous that they couldn't help jumping fast I'd say, 'Beep pardon, ladies and gentlemen, but if you don't mind accelerating your footsteps just a trifle it would materially aid the engineer of this train in his conscientious efforts to run through to the terminal on schedule time. You'd think being polite that way would bring about the desired result, but it wasn't so. Quite the contrary. Instead of hurrying, people would stop to listen to what I was saying, and the consequence was my train never did get through on time. It was always from one to two hours late."

"And they discharged you for being polite, did they?" said I.

"That was the real reason," said Santa Claus, "but the one they gave was that I was so fat I took up the room of three ordinary passengers, so that they lost ten cents at the very least on each trip. At the end of six weeks I was discharged and compelled to look for a new position."

"Poor old Santa Claus—it was outrageous!" said I.

"Oh, no," said the kind hearted old saint. "It was just business. I am pretty big around, you know. Well, the next thing I did was to try being a cab driver. I got a position as the driver of a hansom cab, but I soon lost that. My great size was against me there, too. You see, every time I'd get no into that little seat at the rear of the hansom I was so heavy I lifted the horse clear off his feet. Only his hind legs could reach the ground, and people were afraid to ride with me because they thought the horse was too frisky. Anybody would think that to see a horse trotting down the avenue on his hind legs and his fore feet waving in the air, wouldn't they?"

"Yes, I think they would," said I.

"I tried a four wheeler next, with very similar results," continued the old gentleman. "I weighed down the front of the cab so far that the people inside had all they could do to keep from sliding out the front windows, so my employer called me to him one morning and paid me my wages and sent me off. He gave

me a letter of recommendation to a friend of his in the coal business, for which I thanked him, little dreaming why he did it and for what reason he thought the coal dealer would like to employ me. I presented my letter to the coal man the next morning. He was delighted with me, apparently, and told me to call around the following Monday and he would give me employment at once. This, of course, I did, but alas! only again to be bitterly disappointed."

"Did he go back on his word?" I asked.

"No, indeed; but the work he had for me to do—dear me, I never could think of such a thing," groaned Santa Claus.

"What was it?" I asked. "Shovelling coal?"

"Nothing half so honest," said Santa Claus. "He wanted me to drive his wagon and to sit in the wagon with the coal while it was being weighed."

"You did have a hard time of it!" I cried, as I thought over the old gentleman's experience.

"Yes—and so it went all along," he sighed. "I tried to write poetry for the magazines, but the only kind I knew how to write was the little things they put on candles—little mottoes like—

When this you chance to chew
Remember I love you,
and—

A, B and O are vowels good and true
But the one I love the best of all is U.
I sent a lot of those out to the magazines that print poetry, and they all came back to me by return mail. None of the editors seemed to care for them, and when I took them to—candy store and tried to sell them there they told me they only sold candy and didn't publish it. I was at my wits' end to know what to do, but fortunately I met a man one day who owned a restaurant. His attention was attracted by the fact that I was so stout, and he offered me three meals a day and a place to sleep behind his restaurant if I'd be a sandwich man and walk up and down the street with two big placards on me, one on my back and the other hanging over my chest, with

I Eat
at Bunkerberry's,
1,015 Canal Street.

written on them. He thought it would be a good advertisement for his place, and I guess it was, for he kept me busy until December. It wasn't pleasant work, but it was honest, and I kept at it steadily until I began to get thin, what with the food they gave me and the exercise I had to take. My clothing hung loosely upon me like portieres, and finally he discharged me—said I wasn't what he wanted any more."

Santa Claus paused for a moment, drew a deep sigh, and resumed.

"Then came the last," he said. "To keep my clothes from falling off I stuffed them full of old papers and straw and looked for another place, and a week before Christmas had the good luck to find one in a toy shop. The owner of it thought I looked so like Santa Claus that it would be a first rate thing to have me in his shop for the last week before Christmas. I never let on that I really was Santa Claus for fear he'd think I was crazy or an impostor. I simply went to work and stayed with him for five days, when I was discharged again. You see, I never could get used to selling Christmas presents, so when people came in to buy things I'd just wrap them up and give them away, and one night when the head of the firm came to count up the profits we had a terrible time of it. I'd given away about eight hundred dollars' worth of dolls and mechanical toys and Noah's arks, and when he asked what had become of them and I told him—oh, dear me, he was terribly put out, and so was I. I was put out so quick that I scarcely knew what happened until I gathered myself together and took an inventory of my legs, arms, teeth, ears and other necessities of life. No bones were broken, however, and I was consoled by the fact that only two days remained before the gates of Clausburg would be open again and I could go home."

"It was this thought that carried me through, and when, shortly after midnight of Christmas Eve, I heard the jingling bells of my reindeers and sigh in the cold, frosty air, you can be sure it was a very happy old Santa Claus that waited until they were within halting distance. As soon as they heard my voice they stopped still and then came prancing down to my side, overjoyed to find me still alive and not much the worse for my year of exile. I clambered into the sleigh, and when morning came and we reached the gates of Clausburg after a night of stiff beating I once again entered the streets of my beloved city and an hour later was comfortably lying in my own little trundle bed."

"That," said Santa Claus, rising, "is the story of the only time I was ever locked out of Clausburg, and I resolved then and there that it would be the—"

The sentence was never finished, for even as the old Saint spoke the clock on my mantelpiece began striking six, and the old gentleman with an exclamation of dismay sprang from the bed, flew like lightning up through the chimney and, I presume, leaped into his sleigh and started at breakneck speed for home, for as I listened I heard him give his companion in quick, nervous tones—

"Ging there, Vixen! G'lang, Roaner and Dancer and Frances! We've got three seconds to make the gate! Giddyap!"

But he need not have hurried as fast, and I presume he reached home in safety, for to tell the truth his clock was fifty-five minutes fast.

A Daughter of Santa Claus By Wells Hawks

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NOT since the Hibernians opened their new hall on the day that Murphy's horse threw him in the St. Patrick's parade had the block known such a sensation. Mrs. Corrigan's Katie had gone on the stage, and the tenements were wild with the news. More than that, she had moved over on the west side to live with an aunt, whose husband had made a fortune with the cards and sand, and once she had been down to see her mother in an automobile. It was a sure enough sensation.

Mrs. Corrigan took it mildly. "Katie is a good girl," she would say, "and she'll do a shake for her mother," and she would shake her head and then go over to the mantel and with her apron wipe the dust from the photograph of a tall, slender girl, who, now arrayed in a gorgeous stage gown, looked the beauty that she really was. Katie Corrigan had always been the beauty of the ward. It was she all the boys wanted to dance with the night the Hibernians threw their hall open, and it was current gossip the next day that Paddy Ryan got one over the head in Grogan's for calling down Tim Kelly, who had taken all the dances away from the rest of the gang. And it was Katie, too, who had been the soprano in St. Pious from the time she left the parish school, and Father Shea had gotten a lot of the people who had the money to spare to make up a fund for the cultivation of her voice.

Katie was very proud of the day she took her first lesson, and several Sundays later, when the choir director gave her a bit of solo to sing, her sweet voice went into every one's heart and her face beamed while in one of the back pews Mrs. Corrigan wept tears of real joy into the open pages of her prayer book. This and a hundred other events in the life of popular Katie were being discussed when the news of her going on the stage flashed about the neighborhood.

Mrs. Corrigan was a widow. Pat had been a good man to her, but there were little savings left after he passed away peacefully from the turfs and the shock he got when he fell in a trench working for the Water Department. The wife had always done work, but now she had to have more income, so, through the goodness of Mrs. Hogan, who was the head scrubwoman at the Comedy Theatre, she obtained regular employment, and Katie kept on at school. And as the days passed the little girl who had looked so sweet in her white frock and wreath at the first communion began to grow into womanhood, and the boys and the men, and the women, too, for all that, marvelled at the beauty of Mrs. Corrigan's Katie.

One morning Mrs. Corrigan was sweeping down the centre aisle of the theatre. The musical director was at the place surrounded by a group of girls all struggling with the music of the next piece to be produced by the management. Mrs. Corrigan swept and raised a cloud of dust. The

conductor pounced at his piano while a blending of mezzo and lyric soprano beat upon his ears. Presently some one sounded an amphibious high note that broke almost before it reached its liberty. The director ceased abruptly and the girl began to cough. This stopped his onslaught for a moment, but only for a moment, for he turned on Mrs. Corrigan, shouting—

"For heaven's sake woman, how are those girls going to sing in the dust you are making?"

"Faith, an' how are ye goin' to expect people to come into a theatre if it ain't clean," retorted Mrs. Corrigan, still sweeping.

"Now be sensible, woman," said the leader. "Don't you know these girls can't sing while you sweep?"

"I do not," replied Mrs. Corrigan. "Shure an' I am sweepin' many a time when my Katie is practicin'."

This evidently settled the matter, for the conductor went back to his piano and Mrs. Corrigan continued her cleaning of the centre aisle. Later in the day the conductor came through the lobby and passed Mrs. Corrigan, who was polishing a base-relief thing that suggested something about art. He had a memory, for he remarked—

"So you have a daughter who sings?"

Mrs. Corrigan dropped her rag and looked, and before the man had left he had heard all about Katie and her voice, and it was told with all the enthusiasm of a mother's affection. It impressed the man of music, for he had Katie brought to the theatre, and she sang for him while Mrs. Corrigan stood behind the curtain of the boxes wiping away her tears with the end of her dust rag. Two weeks later a "Miss Katherine Kompton" made her appearance in the chorus, and the gallery doorkeeper passed Mrs. Hogan and Mrs. Corrigan in to be present at Katie's fine debut. And what a night it was when she came home! All of the boys and girls were waiting on the doorstep for Katie, there were heads out of every window, and in the parlor of the Corrigan flat there was a fine banquet "from Tim Kelly to Katie."

"Oh! you are all so good," exclaimed Katie, and then entering the room she threw herself into her mother's arms and kissed her.

"It won't be long, mother, before you will stop working and I can take care of you," she continued.

"Never mind, child," said the mother. "Go to bed, for ye must be tired, the way ye was practicin' and jumpin' about."

Months passed and a summer show survived the first frosts of autumn and became a settled success. Miss Kompton had stepped from the back line to the front, so that her voice might carry the high notes of the ensemble that a very bad voiced prima donna struggled for and never reached. And in those few months how she had grown and developed in carriage and grace, but all with a simplicity of manner that was

especially appealing across the footlights. Tall and slender, but of excellent poise, she held her head as if a little disdainful. Her arms and shoulders were of snowy whiteness. The complexion was that of the truest type of Irish maidenhood, and her well rounded forehead was veiled in the raven black hair that she parted in the centre, allowing it to fall carelessly on either side. So no wonder it became the question, "Who is the pretty Irish girl?" And there was no answer, but that she was Irish, that she was Miss Kompton, and that she lived with relatives on the upper west side. At all of which Katie laughed merrily as she told her mother on the visits down home, where the boys and girls still trooped out to meet her and where the heads hung out of the windows until she was out of sight.

Somewhere between the footlights and the front row of the orchestra seats there is an invisible line where lucks that mischievous little chap who meddles with our hearts, and many of his well aimed darts are those that go over the line from the cross bow of a pair of dancing eyes. Katie had these dancing eyes, but if they fired the darts it was all unconsciously done. At any rate, they had been fired and the girls in the company knew that the target was in the front row every night. Katie did not fully realize it until one night there came to her a huge bunch of roses, and the girls laughed at her surprise. She only knew it was from "Mr. Spencer," and the front row of girls said he was a fine fellow and awfully rich. Katie told her mother about it, and she looked at her for a long time without saying a word.

"Pretty girls will have admirers," Father Shea told Mrs. Corrigan. Two or three nights later it was calling, and Mr. Spencer insisted that she ride home in his automobile. She did, there was a little supper on the way up town, and the next day he drove her through the park. Several more days there were rides in the park, for Katie had expressed a desire to learn how to run the machine, and Mr. Spencer, being accommodating, was glad to give the lessons. Once in a lonesome drive in the park he took her hand and whispered—

"You are making me love you."

"He laughed and blew the horn and he said no more."

Some of Spencer's friends wanted to meet Katie, and as the "character woman" consented to act as chaperon, she consented. It was a midnight affair, and after the supper there was music. Katie was in great spirits. She told stories with a delightful trace of brogue and was as witty and full of blarney as her old dad and all his long line of ancestors. She sang, not a song from the musical comedy she was in, but one of those quaint old Erin melodies she had heard Tommy Welch sing at the hall over Scully's grocery the night Murphy brought the pipe in. It was the hit of the evening, and she had to sing again and again. Spencer was in a

dream, his friends were overjoyed and Katie was happy.

The night before Christmas Spencer's friends planned to return the honor and give Katie a party of their own that would outshine anything in chorus girl society. Katie was willing and promised to sing. She called on her mother in the afternoon and took her a little present. She noticed in the cigar store under the flat that they had cut her picture out of a paper and pasted it on the window. Katie smiled and the boy inside threw her a kiss.

When she passed through the stage door at night a group of girls saluted her—"Hello, Miss Popular."

She did not understand, but when she reached the dressing room she understood the full meaning of the remark. Her dressing table, the chair and all the space about it were piled high with parcels. It looked like a Christmas Eve revel in an express office.

"My! Oh, my, my!" she exclaimed, and then her eyes filled with tears and a big lump came into her throat. The overtime came and then the curtain. The girls went on the stage and she was left alone. Sobbing with joy, and because her heart beat so fast, she looked over the wonderment and the girls in the company knew that the target was in the front row every night. Katie did not fully realize it until one night there came to her a huge bunch of roses, and the girls laughed at her surprise. She only knew it was from "Mr. Spencer," and the front row of girls said he was a fine fellow and awfully rich. Katie told her mother about it, and she looked at her for a long time without saying a word.

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"Never mind," said Katie; "jump in."

"Where shall I go?" asked the boy, taking the wheel.

"Down Broadway and across Union square and down the Bowery. Then I'll run it."

The car shot around the corner and down the Christmas crowded street just as Spencer and his friends came from the restaurant. Katie had "fixed" the stage doorman and he knew nothing.

It was a wild ride, but the boy was doing well, and they turned into the broad street by the park.

"Do you know where I can get a Christmas tree?" asked Katie.

"On First avenue," answered the boy.

They whirled around to a provision store and soon had a tree and a lot of wreaths in the machine. Then Katie took the wheel and soon arrived before the door of her home. The rushing of the machine and the sight of Katie brought everybody out and all the heads to the window. Grogan came out of his saloon and waved his white apron. There were scores of hands to carry the tree and the parcels upstairs and to set it up, and such a chorus of "Ah's!" as all of the beautiful things were spread out. Mrs. Corrigan sat on the sofa and wept and Mrs. Hogan held her hand.

Katie opened a small box and nearly dropped it when she saw a gold bar with a diamond studded "K" on it. Spencer's card was on it. She opened another and it was a simple little bracelet with a scribbled card, "From Tim Kelly to Katie." She pressed it to her lips and slipped it on her arm.

"Oh, I forgot the auto!" she exclaimed. Picking up a piece of wrapping paper she wrote—

"Dear Mr. Spencer—

Forgive me for stealing your auto, but I had a quick call to help Santa Claus. See you soon, maybe. Tell them at the party that this is from a DAUGHTER OF SANTA CLAUS.

P. S.—Please pay messenger boy."

Katie pushed the boy into the machine, shouting—

"Comedy Theatre stage door, Mr. Spencer."

Then she went back to the tree. Everybody in the neighborhood came in, and such a party! Ryan brought up some ice for the boys and Grogan sent over a case of beer. Father Shea came in and made a speech of welcome, and every one drank a toast to Katie.

When all had gone Mrs. Corrigan put her arm about the girl.

"What's the matter, child? You need rest, you're going to a party up town."

"I just couldn't, mother," she said. "I got homesick for you," and she laid her head on the old woman's shoulder.

Outside the boys were giving her a serenade.

"Katie has come home for Christmas," said everybody along the block.

"O'f' glad I got that all night license," said Grogan.

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When she passed through the stage door at night a group of girls saluted her—"Hello, Miss Popular."

She did not understand, but when she reached the dressing room she understood the full meaning of the remark. Her dressing table, the chair and all the space about it were piled high with parcels. It looked like a Christmas Eve revel in an express office.

"My! Oh, my, my!" she exclaimed, and then her eyes filled with tears and a big lump came into her throat. The overtime came and then the curtain. The girls went on the stage and she was left alone. Sobbing with joy, and because her heart beat so fast, she looked over the wonderment and the girls in the company knew that the target was in the front row every night. Katie did not fully realize it until one night there came to her a huge bunch of roses, and the girls laughed at her surprise. She only knew it was from "Mr. Spencer," and the front row of girls said he was a fine fellow and awfully rich. Katie told her mother about it, and she looked at her for a long time without saying a word.

"Pretty girls will have admirers," Father Shea told Mrs. Corrigan. Two or three nights later it was calling, and Mr. Spencer insisted that she ride home in his automobile. She did, there was a little supper on the way up town, and the next day he drove her through the park. Several more days there were rides in the park, for Katie had expressed a desire to learn how to run the machine, and Mr. Spencer, being accommodating, was glad to give the lessons. Once in a lonesome drive in the park he took her hand and whispered—

"You are making me love you."

"He laughed and blew the horn and he said no more."

Some of Spencer's friends wanted to meet Katie, and as the "character woman" consented to act as chaperon, she consented. It was a midnight affair, and after the supper there was music. Katie was in great spirits. She told stories with a delightful trace of brogue and was as witty and full of blarney as her old dad and all his long line of ancestors. She sang, not a song from the musical comedy she was in, but one of those quaint old Erin melodies she had heard Tommy Welch sing at the hall over Scully's grocery the night Murphy brought the pipe in. It was the hit of the evening, and she had to sing again and again. Spencer was in a