

How Christmas Came to Nina

By Madge MacBeth

Illustrated by MM'Laren



Author's Explanatory Note

TELL us a play which will be easy to produce in our club or Sunday School," has been asked me times without number, and it has sometimes been difficult to find one which will not discourage both the actors and producer before the close of half a dozen rehearsals. In "HOW CHRISTMAS CAME TO NINA" therefore, I have tried to write above all things a play easy to cast and easy to produce.

It can be put on with utter simplicity in hall or drawing room; it can be produced on a stage with pleasing elaborateness. But the spirit of it is what counts, not the setting. It is advisable, I think to have one or two adults in the cast; they give a certain confidence to children and the children in turn, can teach adults many a deserved lesson in lack of self-consciousness.

The parts are easy to cast—Mrs. Patterson and Mrs. Scott being just what the lines portray and Mr. Burton, a middle-aged clergyman.

Nina Scott, has the most difficult part of the four little girls, about 13 years of age. I would suggest that she be a brunette, in contrast to A CHILD who ought to be a blonde—angel type if possible.

Mr. Cann, the comedy relief, can be as funny as whisks and a wig can make him.

A CHILD might well be taken by a small adult—one with a sweet, slow speaking voice and an intelligent reading of the part. As to costumes, they are all everyday ones, except those worn by the children in the tableaux, and that worn by a CHILD.

When she enters first, she should be in rags—gray or an indefinite tan; her sleeves torn and bare arms showing. Oldest boots; no wraps. She should be pale, but not dirty. When she comes in at the last, she should be dressed in white robes, her hair flowing, wings if possible, and a delicate crown.

The tableaux and Victrola idea, is introduced obviously to make a full evening's entertainment and to bring a number of children into the cast without giving them lines to learn and thus complicate the production.

I will be glad to answer any questions relating to the play, make-up, songs, etc., if you will write me enclosing a stamped envelope—Madge Macbeth.

SCENE—A Sunday School room. Door to right, leading to street. Door to left, leading to another part of building. Window, rear right. Piano or organ against rear wall. Texts hanging about. One or two tables and a few chairs or benches—not crowding stage. At left, near foot lights, a half trimmed Christmas tree; tinsel, ornaments, etc. Boxes of toys nearby. (See text of play for exact articles). At rise of curtain, MRS. PATTERSON, MRS. SCOTT, and MR. BURTON are discovered, standing near tree.

Mrs. P.—There! I expect the children can finish it all right.

Mrs. S.—I'm sure they can. We have done the highest places.

Mr. B.—And I fear we have used up most of the decorations. There seemed to be so few this

year. And the toys—how will we manage to make them go round?

Mrs. S.—My dear Mr. Burton, please do not distress yourself. It is my experience that children are just as happy when they do not have too much fuss made over them. The old idea of surprise, stockings, Santa Claus and the like, has died. Children are eminently practical, these days. In other words, the Spirit of Christmas is changed.

(A low cry is heard outside, and a CHILD with pale face, peers in at the window a second, then disappears).

Mrs. P.—Listen! Didn't you hear something? It sounded like a child crying.

(All listen. Mr. B. goes to door, opens it and looks out.)

Mr. B.—I thought I heard something, too, but there is no one about. Probably the wind.

(Comes back to tree.)

Mrs. P.—I don't care how practical a child is, Cora, a gift—a gift which is accompanied by love—never fails to please. And we have so many children in the parish this year who will have no other presents than those they get here—I do hope some more things will come in.

(Laughing off stage. Stamping of feet at door Right. Enter DAISY, NINA, MAY and GRACE. Winter clothing.)

Daisy.—Good evening. Oh, how lovely it looks!

Mr. B.—Good evening, girls.

May and Grace.—Good evening.

Nina.—Oh, I say—you promised to let us do it! My hands are nearly frozen, aren't yours, Daisy?

Daisy.—Pretty cold.

May.—We hooked on to Mr. Cann's sleigh. He'll be here in a minute, and asked the children to be ready so he won't have to wait.

(Girls remove wraps. Nina dumps hers on a chair, covering a fair sized box. See text below.)

Mrs. S.—What is he coming for?

Mr. B.—To carry out a happy idea of Mrs. Patterson, who suggested sending photos of our children, in this dear familiar setting, to the boys who enlisted from this parish.

Girls.—Oh, how jolly! May we be in them?

Mrs. P.—Of course. But I am specially depending

Cast of Characters

Mrs. Patterson.
Mrs. Scott
Mr. Burton the Clergyman
Daisy Patterson
Nina Scott
Grace Collard
Mr. Cann, the Photographer
A Child.

As many Sunday School children as desired. As many carols and tableaux as desired.

on you older girls to help make the records a success.

Nina.—What records, Mrs. Patterson?

Mr. B.—Records of our carols and Christmas songs, Nina. Mrs. Patterson's idea, too. She has a Victrola in the hall, there (points to door, left) and all the facilities for recording our music. The discs will be sent to the brave lads Overseas and with photos and songs and socks and plum cakes, they will have a real echo of home—God bless them.

Mrs. S.—That was quite clever of you, Esther. I never would have thought of such a thing. Are the youngsters ready?

Mrs. P.—They ought to be—in the Infant's class room. Shall we go and see? Oh, here is Mr. Cann, now.

(Enter Mr. Cann, camera apparatus in hand. He is a loud-voiced, hearty man.)

Mr. C.—Evening, ladies! Evening, Parson! It's snowing and blowing like Billy—be—Dar—Ahem!—er—that is, like Billy—er—Sunday! Ho, ho! I nearly said it, didn't I? Ho-ho! Well, where are the victims? Not much time to spare... got to do some Christmassing at home, to-night. Oh, by the way, here's a tuque the missus thought might look well on the tree.

(Claps it on the head of a Teddy bear, cat, dog or other animal.)

Mrs. P.—Thank you, Mr. Cann. We need all the things we can get. The children are just about ready.

(Exit Mrs. P. and Mrs. S.)

(Mr. Cann gets busily to work with camera, tripod, black cloth, etc.)

Mr. C.—Come on Parson. Martyrs are called for.

Mr. B.—Oh, the boys don't want my photograph. Not alone, surely.

Mr. C.—Oh, ho! You want to be grouped with the girls. All right—I have an idea. We'll send the boys a parade—Come on, all of you. (He groups Mr. B. and the four girls in door Left; rushes back to camera and snaps the shutter.) Good, now can any of you guess it? It's an adjective.

All.—No, we give it up.

Mr. C.—Wonderful! (All look at one another puzzled.)

Don't you see? Come here. (They crowd round him. He speaks mysteriously.)

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