NOW AND THEN

Dec. 1936.

CHRISTMAS EVE

JUDY VAN DER VEER

At midnight when it's Christmas Eve,
When shining stars are frosty bright
They say the cattle all kneel down
In memory of a Holy Night.

I do not know if this be true,
But if the patient creatures pray
I can understand their pleas,
I can know the words they say.

"Oh God, look down on us tonight
With pity in Thine eyes,
If Thou hast time we beg of Thee,
Hear our anguished cries.

"Not always are we cared for well,
Many and cruel the stripes we bear;
Many of us are hungry, cold,
Many are dying everywhere.

"Soften the hearts of men for us,
For we have served men well,
And often the sorrows that we know
Are more than words can tell."

Under the cold and frosty stars,
Think of the cattle kneeling,
While children sing of joyous things,
And Christmas bells are pealing.

The Lord was born in the stable, among the beasts of the field. Does that not mean that he wishes his human children to take care of the humble beasts?

It has been more than sixty years since Dickens has passed away but his Christmas Carol is read every year, and it is as fresh and instructive as it was when it was written. President Roosevelt gathers his family around him every Christmas Eve and reads the story.

There is another story. "Birds Christmas Carol," by Kate Douglas Wiggin, that is most beautiful. It was used at the High School as a play this Christmas and was supervised by Miss Harriette Louisa Rogers.

The producers who gave you "Broadway Melody of 1936" and "The Great Ziegfeld" come through wtih another smash musical success in "Born to Dance," which comes on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, December 28, 29 and 30 to the New Lyceum Theatre with Eleanor Powell, "Queen of Taps," dancing her way to fresh triumphs to the scintillating song hits of Cole Porter who here tops even his famed "You're the Top."

Its story of a small-town girl who falls in love with a navy man and nearly loses him to a stage favorite is packed with entertainment. It is a logical plot with interesting submarine sequences, picturesque naval backgrounds and comedy highlights but the wealth of spectacular beauty in the lavish scenes, the brilliant dancing and the unforgettable music, plus the attractive performances of the star and a dazzling supporting cast are the distinctive features which make this one of the most entertaining musical pictures to come out of Hollywood.

Miss Powell's work in "Born to Dance" is something akin to sensational. She taps her way up and down stairs, executes a number on a space hardly larger than a dime, leads a "swing" band with her agile toes and in every way lives up to her reputaiton as the world's greatest feminine tap dancer.

There is so much talent in the supporting cast that it is difficult to single and one artist for special praise. Mention must be made, however, of the excellent performances of James Stewart as the hero, Virginia Bruce as the temperamental stage star, Una Merkel and Sid Silvers furnishing the laughs, Frances Langford of the lovely voice. Raymond Walburn, Alan Dinehart and Buddy Ebsen, eccentric hoofer.

Roy Del Ruth, the successful director of such musicals as "Broadway Melody of 1936" and "Gold Diggers of Broadway," has outdone himself in his brilliant direction of "Born to Dance," and the picture also adds a feather to the well-filled cap of Dave Gould who created the memorable "Carioca" and who in the new production has devised some of the most stunning and original dance routine yet seen in pictures.

Spanky McFarland, the personality lad, will create a sensational hit at the New Lyceum Theatre on Friday and Saturday, January 1 and 2 in making his starring screen bow in the new Hal Roach feature-length comedy, "General Spanky." Spanky, for a little fellow in the title role, takes full command in an absorbing story centered on the war between the North and the South. The staging of an Old South background is effectively picturesque.

Two other of Hal Roach's talented "Our Gang" youngseters, Billy Thomas and Carl Switzer, romped on to favoritism with the audience ni "General Spanky."

Adult performances were exceptionally well executed. Phillips Holmes and Rosina Lawrence in the romantic leads and Ralph Morgan and Irving Pichel in character portrayals are excellent. Among others who merit commendation are Louise Beavers, Willie Best and a group of clever negro spiritual singers.

Inspired and effective direction was achieved by Fred Newmeyer and Gordon Douglas. Art Lloyd was responsible for the beautiful photography.

WOMANS PAGE

A NEW YORK CAROL

A True Story of how one man proved that it was more blessed to give than receive. Copied from the New York Times Magazine.

By W. H. MATTHEWS

He came to my office two days before Christmas, one of our great actors, who had retired. "I read in my newspaper this morning," he said, "of your interest in brave old folks, of your wish that every one would think of their loneliness, especially at Christmas time. I'd like very much to help you, if you will permit me to do it in my own way.

"I am likely to be lonely myself at Christmas time. My own special friends all have families of their own. I can hardly expect them to leave their homes on Christmas Eve for mine. And I, too, like to be in my own house before my own fireplace on Christmas Eve. I am wondering if you would help me to have as my guests at dinner on Christmas Eve a group of t he old folks of whom you have written, say about ten—five men, five women; all, let us say, in the neighborhood of 70.

"I have a plan that I think will give jollity to the evening both to my guests and to me. It is sometime since I played a part on the stage. My plan is this. I want to make up as a butler that evening, receive my guests serve the dinner, which I assure you will be a most sumptuous one, and entertain them as long as they wish to stay. I will explain to them when they arrive that their host was unexpectedly called out of town and, rather than disappoint them, had requested me to receive and entertain them.

"Please don't misunderstand. I assure you they will not be embarrassed in any way by my announcement. You may safely leave that to me. I have known all through my life, sometimes in my own profession, many people who bore privation bravely and among them those whose later years were often very lonely."

* * *

That, word for word, was his conversation as nearly as I recall it. The kindness, the sincerity and the gayety of his manner as he revealed to me this Christmas Eve plan I cannot, of course, put into words.

We laughed much together as he told me of the entertainment he was planning to give. Having seen him on the stage several times myself, I expressed to him the wish that I could be one of the ten. His reply was, "Come along." Yet I hardly thought that would be fair. I didn't quite qualify as to age. Then, too, my own Christmas Eve had already been planned around an old folks' gathering elsewhere. I promised him that I would have his guests at his house at 7 p. m.

I easily recall the ten selected. Two couples living mostly on some tiny savings, with not a relative in the city to invite them to dinner at Christmas time. Three old gentlemen who were earning just the necessaries of life by walking slowly each day from small rear tenement rooms to the Old Men's Toy Shop, where two of the three sawed out animals that were then painted by the third and stowed away in Noah's Arks for Santa Claus to drop down chimneys to eager-eyed, expectant children.

A little old lady who walked with a crutch and who made a little money doing crochet work at home. A second lady of the required 70 years, who lived but two blocks away from the one just mentioned. It was arranged that she should call for the other and then, in a taxi, take her to the party and bring her safely home.

"How grand we'll be, going to a party in a taxi," was her remark when the plan was suggested to her.

And the tenth. I had known her for several years. As a young couple she and her husband had come from England to make their way in a new country. As a bookbinder he had succeeded. There had been a little suburban house with a choice flower garden, which had often been described to me. Pneumonia took the husband away. Later had come difficult years. The house had been lost and a room taken in the city where work might be more easily obtained.

"Yes, Christmas time is especially lonely to me, and I'd be glad to go," was her answer to the invitation.

What an evening it was. The day after Christmas the butler host came to tell me about it. For two hours or more after the dinner he had "mimicked" the absent host, entertaining his guests with parts of plays as he, "the butler," had seen and heard "the master" rehearsing them at his home. He had sung for them his best songs, accompanying himself on the piano.

One old man told stories and became inarticulate with laughter over his own jokes long before he got to the end, which made them funnier than ever. And an old lady danced with "the butler" and told him he was almost as good as a professional, which nearly upset his equanimity. He got them singing in chorus, and they recalled later that they made a lot of noise. One old lady tried to beat time, standing up, but she couldn't keep it up; it was too fast for her tired arms.

Outside snow had been falling most of the evening.

When the host felt that the time had come for them to be getting home, although not one of them had said a word about it, he called two taxicabs from the corner, helped them all in with some packages that he made them promise they would not open until they wakened in the morning. He gave the chauffeurs their addresses and stood on the sidewalk in the falling snow shouting out "Merry Christmas!" as they rode away—a performance, as he put it, "of which no real Gramercy Park butler would have been guilty."

* * *

As I started to thank him, he said: "My dear fellow-conspirator, I am the one to give thanks. I had one of the most wonderful evenings of my life. Who was it who said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'?"

For several days afterward I heard about the party from each of the guests in turn. I gathered from all of them that they were not at all sorry that "the master" had been called away. Said one of the toyshop men, "He sure is a good actor, he ought to go on the stage himself." And some days after the party the little old lady who walked with a crutch wrote me, saying: "I am not yet at the bottom of the box of fruit and other good things that he put in the taxi with me."

"I was a little frightened at first," wrote another little lady. "But he made us feel at home right away. I've thought it over so many times and every time I say to myself, 'Why should a man who never saw me before be so good to me'?"

I kept the promise I made to the royal host years ago never to reveal to them that the butler was the master. Now that neither guests nor host are any longer with us I can tell the story. The "butler" was Francis Wilson.

Jane: "They tell me you have a model brother."

Lois: "Yes, but he's not a working model."

Cheese and Rice Balls

2 cups cold boiled rice
½ cup grated store cheese
¼ cup flour
1 egg
1 cup milk
Sifted bread crumbs
Salt

Mix the rice with the cheese and sift in the flour. When well mixed, add stiffly beaten white of egg and form into small balls. Fold in sifted bread crumbs, then dip in the egg and milk beaten together, and back again in bread crumbs. Fry in deep hot fat and drain on unglazed brown paper. If the rice has not been boiled with enough salt, add a little before forming into balls.

Round the Town WITH NANCY TURNER

Each Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings at 9.30, Nancy Turner broadcasts the latest information on fashions, beauty and household. You will enjoy Monday's lively and refreshing chats about today's happenings in a woman's world.

In addition to these morning programs Nancy Turner presents her "Tea Party," a half hour program broadcast direct from the Bubble Room of the Lord Baltimore Hotel every Tuesday afternoon, two-thirty to three o'clock. Prominent stars of the stage, screen and radio are interviewed and usually perform to the capacity audience of 150 women, who have been fortunate enough to secure reservations months in advance.

Such well-known artists and speakers have included: Mayor Howard Jackson, Ely Culbertson, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jr., Leo Carrillo, Vera Van, Bob Crosby, Conrad Thibault, Company of "Naughty Marietta", Company of "Blossom Time", Ann Nichols, Sarah Churchill and a splendid list of other famous personages who have added interest and character to each show.

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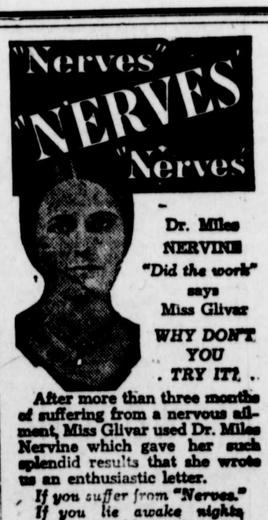
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