

THE WHITE CHRISTMAS

From the book "The White Christmas and other Merry Christmas Plays" by Walter Ben Hare

A CHRISTMAS MORALITY PLAY IN ONE ACT.

Originally produced by the Quadrangle Club of the University of Missouri, Christmas Eve, 1909.

CHARACTERS.

MARY - The Maiden Mother
JOSEPH - Of the House of David
SIMEON - An Old Shepherd
TIMOTHY - A Shepherd, the Husband of Anna
ISAAC - A Young Shepherd
ANNA - The Wife of Timothy, the Shepherd
THOMAS - Her Little Son
RUTH - Her Little Daughter
DEBORAH - Hostess of an Inn at Bethlehem
RACHEL - A Maiden of Bethlehem
PRISCILLA - Her Cousin
MELCHOIR }
GASPAR } - The Wise Men from the East.
BALTASAR }

A Concealed Choir. The Prologue.

For description of costumes, arrangement of the scene, etc., see "Remarks on the Production" at the end of the play.

TIME OF PLAYING--About One Hour.

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SCENE I: Before the play begins the PROLOGUE steps in front of the curtains and addresses the congregation.

PROLOGUE.

The earth has grown old with its burden of care,
But at Christmas it always is young,
The heart of the jewel burns lustrous and fair,
And its soul, full of music, bursts forth on the air,
When the song of the angels is sung.

It is coming, Old Earth, it is coming tonight!
On the snowflakes which cover thy sod
The feet of the Christ Child fall gentle and white,
And the voice of the Christ Child tells out with delight,
That mankind are the children of God.

On the sad and the lonely, the wretched and poor,
The voice of the Christ Child shall fall;
And to every blind wanderer open the door

Of hope that he dared not to dream of before,
With a sunshine of welcome for all.

--Phillips Brooks.

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David. To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife....

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

(Exit PROLOGUE.)

(Soft chimes. As these chimes die away in the distance a concealed choir is heard singing.)

O COME, COME, AWAY.

O come, come away
From labor now reposing,
Let busy care a while forbear;
O come, come away.

(The front curtains are drawn, showing a winter street in Bethlehem. No one appears on the stage, but the choir continues singing outside at right front.)

Come, come, our social joys renew,
And thus where trust and friendship grew,
Let true hearts welcome you,
O come, come away.

RACHEL and PRISCILLA enter from the inn at right front, arm in arm. They go to the center, then to the rear of the stage, turn and face the inn, pause a moment or two, listening to the choir, and then go out at rear left. The choir continues:

From toils and the cares
On which the day is closing,
The hour of eve brings sweet reprieve,
O come, come away.
O come where love will smile on thee,
And round its hearth will gladness be,
And time fly merrily,
O come, come away.

While the choir is singing the last three lines of the song, SIMEON and ISAAC enter from rear left, leaning on their shepherd's crooks. They pause at rear

center and listen to the singing. When the song is finished the organ continues the same music softly.

SIMEON.

Make haste, my son, the hour is waxing late,
The night is cold, methinks our sheep await.

ISAAC.

Nay gran'ther, I would liefer tarry here.
The town is gay, the inns are full of cheer.

SIMEON (points to rear right).

But there our duty lies, the wind grows cold!
Come, let's away and put the sheep in fold.

(Starts off right.)

ISAAC.

Nay, Simeon, wait! What means this crowd of men
And women here in peaceful Bethlehem?

SIMEON (comes to him).

Herod the King hath issued a decree
That each and all his subjects taxèd be;
And every one who in this town saw light
Must here return and register tonight.
From all Judea, aye, from th' distant land,
Each Bethlehemite must come at his command.

ISAAC (Comes to the doorway of the inn and peers in).

The town is full of people, great and small,
Each inn is crowded to its very wall.

SIMEON (comes down center and takes his arm).

But come, we're wasting time, 'tis very late.
Make haste, my son, I know the flocks await!

ISAAC.

Thou speakest true, though I would rather stay,
Our duty calls, so to the hills, away!

(They go out at rear right.)

The concealed choir repeats the first stanza of the song softly.
After a slight pause DEBORAH enters from the inn.

DEBORAH (coming down to right front).

My inn is crowded to the doors. The heat
Is stifling, but out here the air is sweet.

(Looks upward.)

The bright stars twinkle with mysterious light,
Methinks there's something strange about the night.

She sits on the bench in front of the inn. TIMOTHY enters from rear left.
DEBORAH continues her soliloquy.

The air is still, the night is very cold,
The shepherds seek the hills to watch the fold.

(Sees him.)

(TIMOTHY goes out at rear R.)

DEBORAH.

Some strange, unearthly voice seems calling me,
Methinks this night portends great things to be.

Enter RACHEL and PRISCILLA from rear right, then come down center and address the hostess.

RACHEL.

Hail, hostess of the inn, my cousin here
Hath lodgings at your inn. We'd seek its cheer.

DEBORAH (rises).

Enter within. My guests tonight are gay
And fain would turn this winter's night to day.

RACHEL and PRISCILLA enter the inn, followed by DEBORAH. The organ music continues softly. After a slight pause enter ANNA from rear left. She leads RUTH and THOMAS by the hand.

THOMAS (at rear center).

Oh, mother, hark! There's music in the inn!

ANNA.

'Tis not for us--their noise and merry din.

RUTH.

Our little town is crowded, joyous, gay.

THOMAS.

So many travelers came this way today.

RUTH.

The night is chill and cold, I much do fear
The little sheep will shiver by the mere.

ANNA.

Too cold it is for thee, I fear, in truth,
Return and get thy cloak, my little Ruth.
We'll wait for thee upon the little hill.

(Points off R.)

But speed thy steps, the cold will work thee ill.

RUTH.

I'll fly, dear mother, like an arrow home.

(Runs out at L.)

ANNA.

We must not tarry. Come, my Thomas, come!

(She leads him out at rear R. There is a pause. The music changes to a mysterious plaintive air. The old German song, Holy Night, may be effectively introduced as an organ solo.)

Enter from rear right, JOSEPH, walking with a staff and supporting MARY.

MARY.

Here is a place, now I must rest awhile!
For many a league, for many a weary mile,
We've trudged along since break of day began.

JOSEPH.

'Tis true, and I'm an old and ancient man,
My joints are stiff, my bones are waxing old--
And the long night is bitter, bitter cold.
Here take my cloak and keep thee warm within,
And wait thee here while I search out an inn.

(He wraps his cloak around her and seats her on the bench or stool in front of the manger. He goes out at rear left. The music changes to the Magnificat, to be found in all Episcopal hymnals.)

MARY (sings).

My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For he hath regarded: the lowliness of his handmaiden.
For behold, from henceforth: all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty has magnified me: and holy is his Name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him: throughout all generations.
He hath showed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek.
He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel: as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed, forever.

Enter JOSEPH from rear L.

JOSEPH.

For hours I've trudged the street in fruitless quest,
Here is an inn, mayhap at last we'll rest.

Enter DEBORAH from the inn.

MARY.

Husband, I'm faint; I can no farther go.
Methinks I'll rest me here upon this loe.

(Sits in front of the manger.)

JOSEPH (assisting her).

Have courage, Mary, here's the hostess here.

(Comes to DEBORAH at right.)

We'd lodge with thee tonight.

DEBORAH.

Alas, I fear
My inn is crowded to the very wall,
Soldiers and scribes, the rich, the great, the small!

JOSEPH.

Is there room for us? My wife is ill.

DEBORAH.

My heart is sad and it is not my will
To send you hence, but naught is left to do.
Perhaps some other inn will shelter you.

JOSEPH.

Alas, the other inns are all the same!

DEBORAH.

Never was seen the like in Bethlehem.

(Laughter and noise at R.)

My guests are merry, hear their jovial din!

(Goes to R.)

I pity you, there's no room at the inn.

(Exits into the inn.)

MARY.

Our last hope gone! Now, what shall we do?
My strength is leaving!

(Bows head.)

JOSEPH.

Would I could succor you.
I'll wrap thee warm. Now rest thee here a while.
We've traveled far, full many a weary mile.

Enter RUTH from rear L., hurrying along.

JOSEPH.

Maiden, I fain would stop thee in thy flight--
Can'st tell where we could lodge this winter night?

RUTH.

That inn is crowded. There's one upon the hill.

JOSEPH.

I've tried them all, my wife is very ill.

RUTH.

That little stable there upon the loe,

(Points to L front.)

'Tis snug and warm. 'Twill shield thee from the snow.

MARY (rises).

God's blessing on thy little head, sweet child!
Come, Joseph, for the wind now waxes wild.

(Exits L. front.)

(JOSEPH leads her to exit L., then turns and looks off R.)

JOSEPH.

O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth

(Turns toward manger.)

The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight.

(RUTH stands at rear C., watching him.)

The curtains slowly fall.

Scene II: Hymn by the congregation.

WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED THEIR FLOCKS.

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground.
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around,
And glory shone around.

"Fear not," said he,--for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind,
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
To you and all mankind,
To you and all mankind."

"To you in David's town this day,
Is born of David's line,
The Saviour, who is Christ, the Lord,
And this shall be the sign,
And this shall be the sign."

"The heav'nly babe you there shall find

To human view displayed,
All meanly wrapped in swathing bands,
And in a manger laid,
And in a manger laid."

Thus spake the seraph--and forthwith
Appeared a shining throng
Of angels, praising God, who thus
Addressed their joyful song,
Addressed their joyful song:--

"All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good will henceforth, from heav'n to men,
Begin and never cease,
Begin and never cease."

The PROLOGUE appears before the curtains and speaks.

PROLOGUE.

There's scarlet holly on the streets, and silver mistletoe;
The surging, jeweled, ragged crowds forever come and go.
And here a silken woman laughs, and there a beggar asks--
And, oh, the faces, tense of lip, like mad and mocking masks.
Who thinks of Bethlehem today, and one lone winter night?
Who knows that in a manger-bed there breathed a Child of Light?

There's fragrant scent of evergreen upon the chilling air;
There's tinsel tawdriness revealed beneath the sunlight's glare;
There's Want and Plenty, Greed and Pride--a hundred thousand souls,
And, oh, the weary eyes of them, like dull and sullen coals.
Who knows the town of Bethlehem, once gleamed beneath the star,
Whose wondrous light the shepherds saw watching their flocks afar?

And yet above the city streets, above the noise and whir,
There seems to come a fragrant breath of frankincense and myrrh.
I saw a woman, bent and wan, and on her face a light
The look that Mary might have worn that other Christmas night.
And as the little children passed, and one lad turned and smiled,
I saw within his wistful eyes the spirit of the Child.

--Caroline Reynolds.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field,
keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the
Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them;
and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings
of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in
the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in
swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. (Exit PROLOGUE at L.)

(Soft chimes are heard. The SHEPHERDS, accompanied by the concealed choir, are heard singing:)

LEAD, KINDLY LIGHT

Lead, kindly Light, amid th' encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark and I am far from home;
Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet, I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.

As the SHEPHERDS begin on the second stanza of the hymn, the curtains rise disclosing the same scene as before. SIMEON, TIMOTHY and ISAAC discovered seated in a group at rear center, singing. THOMAS stands by his father.

So long Thy pow'r hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost a-while.

SIMEON.

Me thought I heard a whir of wings on high.

TIMOTHY.

I see naught save the snow and starry sky.

ISAAC.

We've come a long and mighty step today,
From o'er the frosty hills and far away.

THOMAS (pointing over the manger).

Look, father, dost thou see that shining star
That seems to stand above the town so far?
'Tis like a wondrous blossom on a stem,
And see, it ever shines o'er Bethlehem!

TIMOTHY.

A brighter star, I'm sure I never saw--
And perfect form, without a speck or flaw.

SIMEON.

A stranger star! It never shone before,
It standeth still above that stable door.

Enter ANNA and RUTH from rear left. ANNA carries a little lamb.

ANNA (joining the group).

Look ye, I've found a little lamb new-born.

TIMOTHY.

Poor little beastie! Wrap him well and warm.

SIMEON.

An ill night to be born in, frost and snow,
Naught but cold skies above, cold earth below.
I marvel any little creature should be born
On such a night.

ANNA.

I found it all forlorn,
Crying beside its mother in the storm.

SIMEON (comes down a little to right front).

Hark, I thought I heard a sound of mighty wings!
Listen! Is it the winter sky that sings?

ISAAC (with the group at rear center).

Nay, gran'ther, I heard naught. You're old and gray
And weary with the miles you've walked today.

SIMEON.

At noon I met a man who tarried in the shade,
He led a mule, and riding it a maid--
A maiden with a face I'll ne'er forget,
A wondrous face, I seem to see it yet
Lit with an inward shining, as if God
Had set a lighted lamp within her soul.
Many have passed all day, but none like these,
And no face have I ever seen like hers.

TIMOTHY.

Belike the man and maid were strangers here,
And come to Bethlehem at the king's command.

RUTH (comes down to SIMEON and takes his hand).

Methinks I met that very man and maid--
A maiden with such wondrous dove-like eyes,
I saw them near this place, all tired and worn,
Trudging about the town, seeking an inn.

SIMEON.

And did they find one?

RUTH.

Nay, not so!
For every inn was crowded to its doors.
Hard by Deborah's inn there is a little barn,
All full of cattle, oxen, cooing doves--
I showed it to them, and they went therein.

THOMAS (standing at rear L. with ANNA).
Mother, that star! That wondrous, wondrous light,

(Points up.)

It turns the night to day, it shines so bright
I am afraid! It cannot be that any star,
Only a star, can give so great a light.
It frightens me.

ANNA.
All things are strange tonight.
The very sheep are restless in their fold,
They watch the star and do not mind the cold.

SIMEON (puts hand to right ear, bends toward right and listens).
Again I heard a singing in the sky!

TIMOTHY.
You heard the tinkling bell of some stray sheep,
The night grows late, come let us all to sleep.

SIMEON.
Yea, all ye lie down and take your rest,
I'll keep the watch alone, this night is blest.

(The others recline at the rear.)

ANNA (comes to SIMEON).
Here, take the little sheep and keep it warm.

(Lies down.)

SIMEON.
Poor little new-born beast, I'll guard from harm.
Again I marvel that you should be born
On such a night, poor little lamb forlorn.

(SIMEON walks toward the manger with the sheep in his arms. The others sleep.)

The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

(Soft Music.)

Hark! There's music in the wind! And that strange light
There in the east, it brightens all the night!
I seem to hear again the whir of wings,
Awake, awake! It is an angel sings!

(He arouses the others. They listen wonderingly, standing or reclining.)

VOICE (an unseen soprano chants softly).

Glory to God in the highest!
Fear not!
For behold I bring you glad tidings
Of great joy.
For unto you is born this day
In the city of David, a Saviour
Which is Christ, the Lord.
And this shall be the sign unto you:
Ye shall find the heavenly Babe
Wrapped in swaddling clothes,
Lying in a manger.
Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace,
Good will toward men!

TIMOTHY.

'Twas a fine voice, even as ever I heard.

ANNA.

The hills, as with lightning, shone at his word.

SIMEON.

He spoke of a Babe here in Bethlehem.
That betokens yon star!
Full glad would I be,
Might I kneel on my knee,
Some word to say to that Child.

TIMOTHY.

See! In the east there breaks the day.

ANNA.

Let us tarry no longer; away, then, away!

(ANNA goes out at rear, behind the stable, with TIMOTHY, RUTH and THOMAS.)

ISAAC.

Come, gran'ther, let us go and see this thing!

SIMEON.

But first get gifts to take the new-born King!
Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace,
Good will toward men.

(They follow the others out at rear.)

The curtains fall.

SCENE III: Hymn by the congregation:

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING.

Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled."
Joyful, all ye nations, rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th' angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem."

Christ, by highest Heaven adored;
Christ, the everlasting Lord;
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of the favored one.
Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see;
Hail th' incarnate Deity:
Pleased, as man with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel.

Hail! The Heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail! The Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die:
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

Enter PROLOGUE before the closed curtains.

PROLOGUE.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

The White Christmas.

As the three wise men rode on that first Christmas night to find the manger-cradled Babe of Bethlehem, they bore gifts on their saddle-bows. Gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And so the spirit of Christmas giving crept into the world's heart. We bring our gifts to the children. Rich children, poor children! The children of the high and the children of the humble! Poor little sick children—and the ragged children of the slums of our cities. Let us remember them all.

So go ye, all of ye, into the highways and byways, and seek out the poor and the distressed, the humble and the afflicted, seek out the ragged children and the outcasts and the aged ones, and in the name of Him who was born on Christmas day, carry some sunshine into their hearts! Give unto the poor and the afflicted, and your hearts shall glow with that inward peace that passeth all understanding.

Then--and then only--will you be able to sing with all the company of Heaven, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will toward men! And this will be your pure white Christmas. (Exit PROLOGUE at L.)

Soft chimes are heard. The curtains are drawn, disclosing the same scene as before. DEBORAH sits before her inn, deep in thought.

DEBORAH (reading a scroll).

This is the ancient prophecy. Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

Enter GASPAR from behind the inn. He comes down center.

GASPAR.

I pray thee, tell me, Lady Bethlehemite,

If any wonders you have seen this night?

DEBORAH (rises).

I've seen a wondrous silver shaft of light
Come from a star, and blinded is my sight.

GASPAR.

Tell me, for thou art native of this place,
What dost thou know about the King of Grace--
King of the Jews?

DEBORAH.

Aye, in Jerusalem
He dwells, and not in Bethlehem.
He sits upon his mighty judgment throne,
Cruel and stern, his heart a living stone.

GASPAR.

I mean a new-born King, of love and peace;
His is the star--His reign shall never cease.

DEBORAH.

All things tonight seem passing strange to me,
I have just read an ancient prophecy
That this, our Bethlehem, King David's town,
Shall be the birthplace, e'er of great renown,
Of one called Councillor of King David's line
Whose coming is foretold in words divine.
And now you come with words of mystery!

(Muses.)

Why should thy questions, which are dark to me,
Cause me to think of Him?

GASPAR.

The star! The star!
No more it moves about the heavens afar,
It standeth still. O, hostess, kneel and pray,
For Jesus Christ, the Lord, is born today!

(Hurries out right.)

DEBORAH.

His words are fraught with mystery; I'll within
And seek protection in my humble inn.

(Exits right front.)

After a short pause, MELCHOIR, GASPAR and BALTASAR enter from rear right.

MELCHOIR.

Three kings came riding from far away,
Melchoir, Gaspar and Baltasar;
Three wise men out of the east were they,

And they traveled by night and they slept by day,
For their guide was a beautiful, wonderful star.

BALTASAR.

The star was so beautiful, large and clear,
That all other stars of the sky
Became a white mist in the atmosphere;
And by this they knew that the coming was near
Of the Prince foretold in prophecy.

GASPAR.

Of the child that is born, O Baltasar,
I begged a woman to tell us the news;
I said in the east we had seen His star,
And had ridden fast and had ridden far
To find and worship the King of the Jews.

--Adapted from Longfellow.

MELCHOIR.

Brothers, our quest is ended; see the star
Is standing still over this lowly hut.

BALTASAR.

Methinks it is a stable. Knock and see!

GASPAR (knocks on the door of the manger).

What ho, within!

JOSEPH enters from the L. rear.

JOSEPH.

Sirs, whom seek ye?

MELCHOIR.

We have journeyed from afar
Led by the shining of yon splendid star.
We are Gaspar, Melchoir and Baltasar.

BALTASAR.

We seek a new-born King,
Gold, frankincense to him we bring.
And many a kingly offering.

JOSEPH draws back the curtain and reveals the interior of the manger. MARY is seen bending over the crib. The SHEPHERDS are kneeling in the background. Very soft music heard in the distance, with faintly chiming bells at intervals.

GASPAR.

Behold, the child is clothed in light!

MELCHOIR.

Our journey ends, passed is the night.

BALTASAR.

Now let us make no more delay,
But worship Him right worthily.

(They enter the manger and kneel.)

SIMEON.

Hail, hail, dear child
Of a maiden meek and mild.
See, he merries!
See, he smiles, my sweeting,
I give thee greeting!
Have a bob of cherries.

(Places a spray of cherries on the crib.)

TIMOTHY.

Hail, little One we've sought,
See, a bird I've brought,
See its feathers gay.
Hail, little One adored,
Hail, blessed King and Lord,
Star of the day!

(Places a bird on the crib.)

ISAAC.

Hail, little One, so dear,
My heart is full of cheer,
A little ball I bring,
Reach forth thy fingers gay,
And take the ball and play,
My blessed King.

(Places a ball on the crib.)

Enter all others from the Inn. They kneel outside the manger.

ALL (sing, with concealed choir).

CHRISTMAS CAROL.

(See page 169)

Christ was born on Christmas day,
Wreathe the holly, twine the bay,
Light and life and joy is He--
The Babe, the Son,
The Holy One
Of Mary.

He is born to set us free;
He is born our Lord to be;
Carol, Christians, joyfully;
The God, the Lord,
By all adored
Forever.

Let the bright red berries glow,
Everywhere in goodly show,
Life and light and joy is He,
 The Babe, the Son,
 The Holy One
 Of Mary.

Christian men, rejoice and sing;
'Tis the birthday of our King,
Carol, Christians, joyfully;
 The God, the Lord,
 By all adored
 Forever.

THE THREE KINGS.

Hail, King of Kings!

GASPAR.

I bring Thee a crown, O King of Kings,
And here a scepter full of gems,
For Thou shalt rule the hearts of men.

(Places crown and scepter on crib.)

MELCHOIR.

For Thee I bring sweet frankincense!

(He swings a smoking censor.)

BALTASAR.

And I bring myrrh to offer Thee!

(Places casket on the crib.)

GASPAR.

The greatest gift is yet ungiven,
The gift that cometh straight from Heaven.
 O, Heavenly King,
 Heart's love we bring.

MELCHOIR.

Not gold nor gems from land or sea
Is worth the love we offer Thee.

BALTASAR.

And lowly folk who have no gold,
Nor gift to offer that is meet,
May bring the dearest thing of all--
A loving heart and service sweet.

(All join in singing "Joy to the World.")

Curtain falls.

THE WHITE CHRISTMAS.

WHAT IT MEANS.

How to make a pleasant, helpful Christmas for the Sunday School is an annual problem. A tree with gifts, Santa Claus coming down the chimney, a treat of candy and nuts--these and many other schemes have been tried with a greater or less degree of success. But the criticism is often made that the true significance of the celebration of the birth of Christ is lost in the mere idea of bartering Christmas presents. "She didn't give me anything last year, so I'm not going to give her anything this year."

One wise superintendent determined to teach his Sunday School pupils the precious lesson of the beauty of giving. He called his teachers together a few weeks before Christmas and proposed to eliminate entirely the idea of "getting something," and in its stead to try to teach something of the true spirit of Christmas, the blessedness of giving.

The children were told that while at home they would receive all the usual presents, of course they would not get anything whatever from the Sunday School. The story of Jesus and how He gave His life, and how He liked best the gifts that cost us something, love, thought, foresight, charity, money--was told to the children and they were asked to save their pennies, instead of spending them for candy and nuts, to brighten the Christmas Day for God's poor and unfortunate.

It was put to a vote and every little hand was raised, although it may be confessed that a few went up a little reluctantly.

Teachers and young ladies met a few evenings later and made little stockings out of cheap cambric, with a cord put into the top of each in such a manner that it could be drawn together so the pennies would not be lost out. The stockings were about five inches long, and of various bright colors, and there were enough for every child. These were given out two weeks before Christmas.

On Christmas Eve, near the close of the regular program, a large tree was disclosed, but without a single present on it. The Minister made a short talk on the joys of giving to the poor and the children marched up, singing a Christmas carol, and attached their little stocking-bags to the tree.

Six little boys and girls passed among the congregation with larger stockings, collecting donations for the tree. These stockings had their tops neatly sewed around little circles of wire to keep them open.

The program consisted of Christmas hymns and carols, interspersed with recitations--all breathing the spirit of the White Christmas.

REMARKS ON THE PRODUCTION.

SCENERY.

Hang the rear and the sides of the stage with dark blue curtains, spangled with small silver bits of tinfoil, to represent very tiny stars. If the blue curtains are not available, use white sheets.

Cover the floor with white sheets. Have two or three small evergreen trees at rear, covered with white calcimine and diamond powder. Soak long rags, shaped like icicles, in a strong solution of alum, and then let them crystallize, then attach them to the trees.

Down right, near the audience, is a doorway, supposed to be the entrance to the inn. This may be simply an opening between two wooden columns, with a step or two leading in. A lantern hangs over the door. A small bench stands by the inn.

Down left, near the audience, is the manger, a building extending out from left about seven feet. It has a back and one side of scenery or dark draperies and a thatched roof, covered with twigs or evergreen branches. There may be a door leading into the manger from the stage, but this is not necessary, as the characters can go out behind the manger. A front curtain, of dark goods, conceals the interior of the manger from the audience until it is withdrawn by Joseph.

The interior of the manger is covered with hay. Rude boxes and farm implements all around. A large upturned chair with wooden legs may simulate the crib, if it is concealed by enough straw. An electric light bulb is concealed in this straw and shines on the face of Mary, bending over the crib.

If desired, the manger scene may be presented in the choir loft, the manger hidden by curtains until revealed by Joseph. In this case have the evergreen trees at the left of the stage and arrange the manger scene at the rear and elevated above the other scene. This will prove most feasible in churches where the choir loft is immediately behind and above the platform.

LIGHTS.

Dim all the lights in the audience. Have a powerful searchlight, engine headlight or two powerful auto lights shining on the stage from a concealed elevation at the left. Shade these lights with a blue isinglass shield, thus casting a blue light over the entire stage. Use a strong yellow light on the manger scene, the rest of the stage being in darkness.

PROPERTIES.

If it is possible have bits of white confetti or finely cut paper fall from above during the shepherds' scene in Act II.

The bases of the trees should be covered with cotton.

Three rough crooks for the shepherds.

Chimes to ring off the stage. A dinner gong or set of chimes will answer.

For the lamb use a white muff, being careful to shield it from the direct gaze of the audience.

A spray of cherries.

A small bird of blue feathers.

A ball.

A crown and scepter made of gilded wood.

A censor made of metallic butter dish suspended by chains.

A fancy jewel case, supposed to contain myrrh.

Bench in front of inn.

Rude box in front of manger.

COSTUMES.

MARY--A sweet-faced blonde. Long tunic of light blue, falling straight from neck to the ankles. White stockings. Sandals. Hair in two long braids either side of face. White veil draped around head and shoulders, bound about the brow with circlet. Dark red mantle, fastened to left shoulder and draped around body. This mantle may trail on the ground. The tunic may be made of cotton crepon, the mantle of dyed muslin.

JOSEPH--A virile, bearded man of about fifty. Sandals. Long black cassock, easily obtained from an Episcopal choir. Striped couch cover may serve as mantle. This should be draped about head and body. Long staff.

SIMEON--An old man with white hair and beard. Tunic of potato sacking falling in straight folds from neck to ankles. Large gray shawl serves as mantle, draped on head and body. Long crook. Sandals.

TIMOTHY--Man of forty. Costume similar to Isaac's. Striped mantle.

ISAAC--Man of twenty. Shorter tunic similar to Simeon's. Fur rug draped over left shoulder. Dark red drapery on head. Sandals. Brown stripes criss-crossed on legs. Crook.

ANNA--Long tunic of brown. Take a square white sheet and stripe it with bands of dark blue. This serves as a mantle, draped over head and body. Hair hanging. A woman of thirty-five. Sandals. If desired, a blue veil may be draped around the head and neck and the mantle draped over the body.

THOMAS--A boy of seven. Sandals. Brown strips criss-crossed on legs from sandals to hips. Short white tunic cut like a boy's nightgown, but coming only to knees. Dark blue mantle. Small crook.

RUTH--A girl of eleven. Blue tunic hanging in straight folds from neck to three or four inches above ankles. Border of figured goods, to simulate oriental embroidery, around bottom of robe and down the front. This should be about two inches wide. Sandals. White stockings. Hair hanging. White veil draped around head and shoulders. Later she enters with striped mantle.

DEBORAH--A dignified matron of about forty-five. Sandals. Long kimono of solid color. Sash of yellow. Hair in two long braids on either side of face. Yellow drapery over head and shoulders. Rich striped mantle draped over the costume.

RACHEL--Sandals. White tunic trimmed with red figured cloth to simulate oriental embroidery. Red sash. Wreath of red roses on head. Mantle made of a square white sheet with stripes of red sewed on it. Bracelets, armlets and anklets of silver paper.

PRISCILLA--Sandals. Light green tunic. Dark green mantle. Gold paper armlets, etc.

MELCHOIR--Tall, dark man with dark mustache. Long black cassock may be borrowed from an Episcopal Church. Over this is a red or yellow kimono. Sandals. Turban on head. This turban may be made from a calico covered crown of an old derby, with red and white striped rim. He wears many rich ornaments. Curtain chains around neck and on arms. This costume may sometimes be borrowed from a lodge of Shriners, Knights Templar, Royal Arch Masons or Odd Fellows.

GASPAR--Similar to Melchoir. He is a young king aged about twenty-two. Wear white drapery on head and over it a golden (paper) crown. May wear sword. Sandals.

BALTASAR--Old king with white hair. Long rich robe or kimono over a cassock. Red sash. Red head drapery. Golden crown. Sandals.

ANGELS--Invisible to the audience.

PROLOGUE--Stately lady in trailing Grecian robe of white. Hair powdered. This character should be played by a lady with distinct dramatic ability.

NOTE.--If it is desired to simplify these costumes, kimonos, cassocks and cottas from Episcopal choirs, draperies of sheets and couch covers, and sandals made of a sole bound to foot with brown cloth cords, will answer admirably in the dim blue light.

Nightgowns, dressing gowns, fur rugs, fur muffs opened, fur stoles, opera capes, spangled tunics, window cords and chains, etc., will make valuable substitutes for the oriental garments.